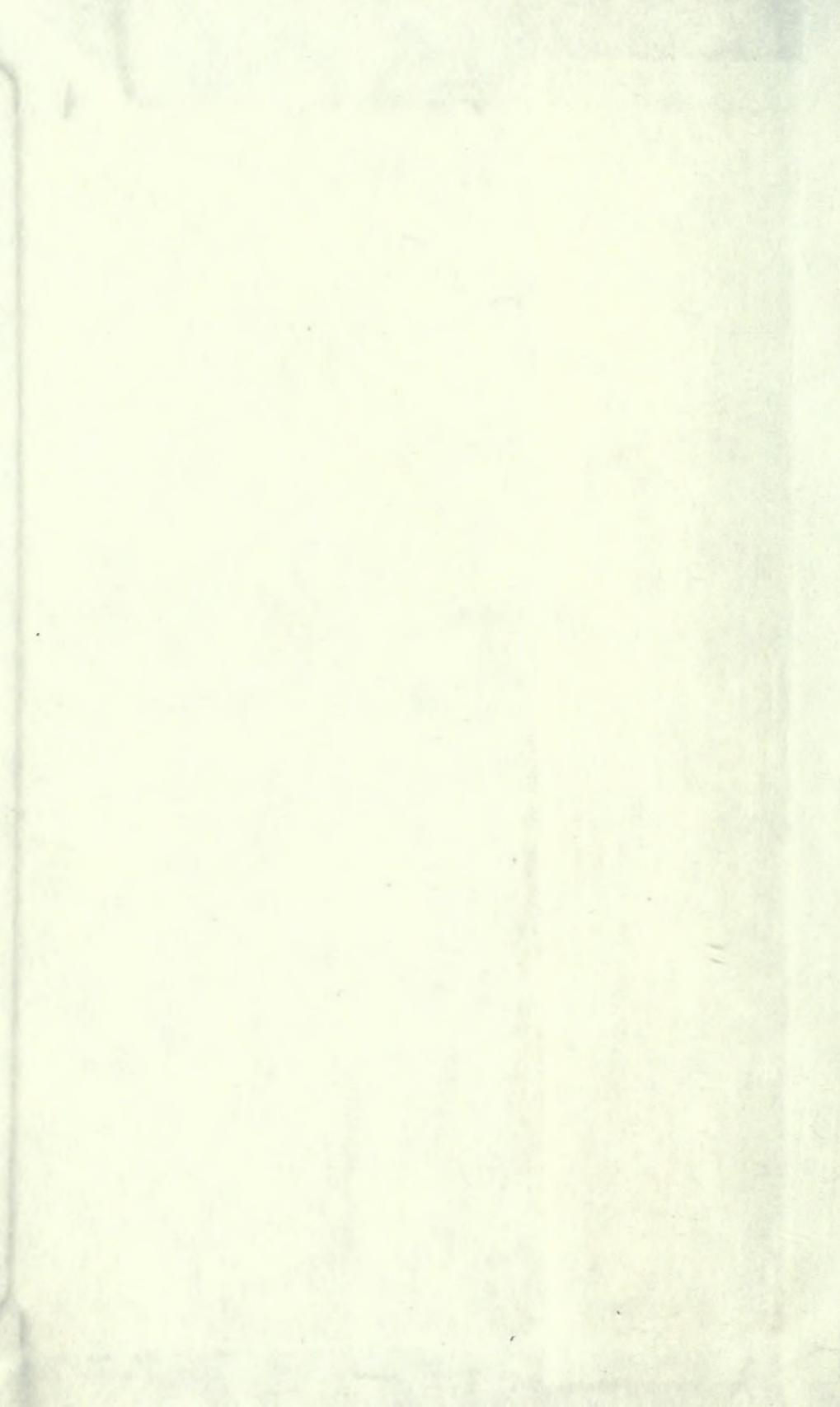
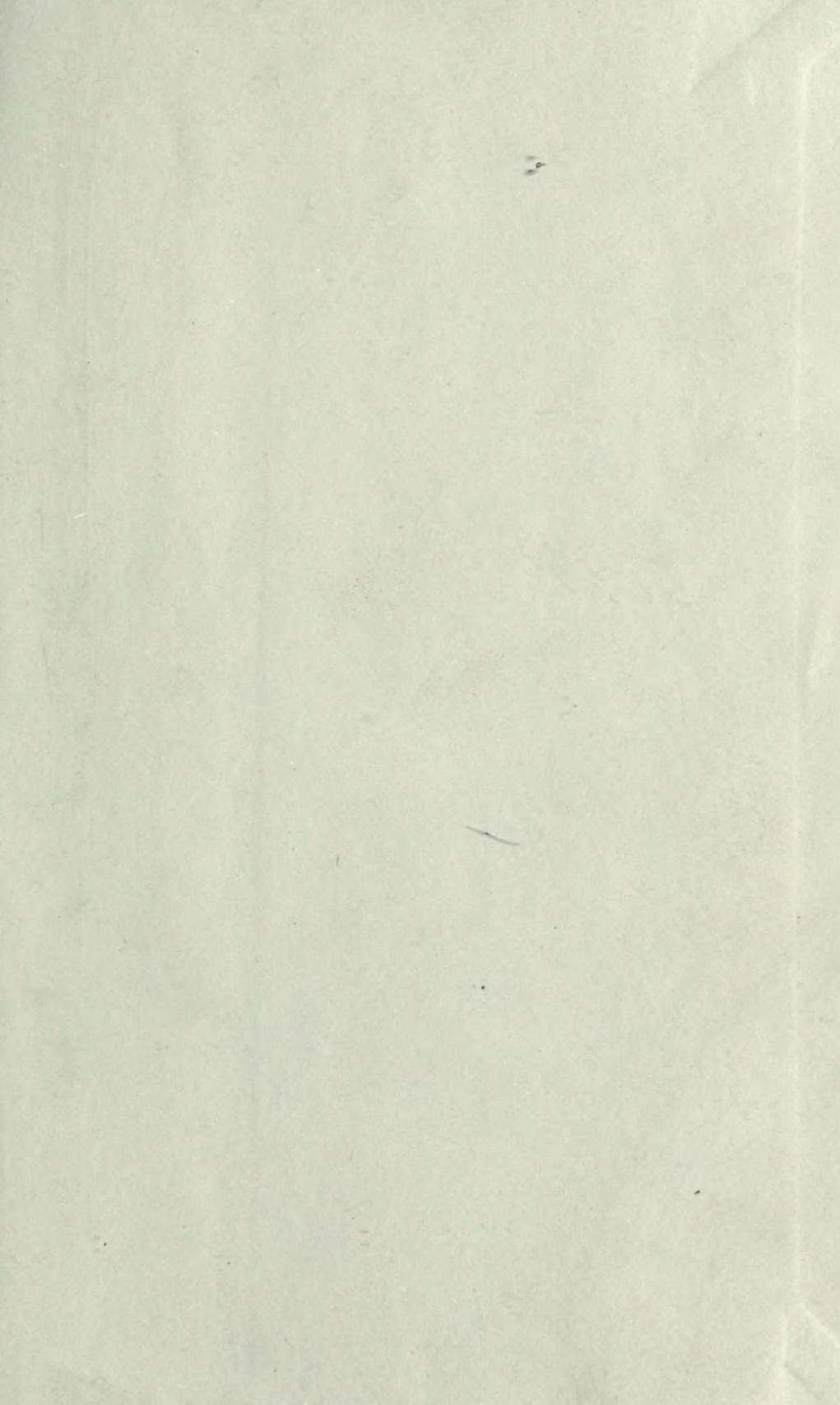


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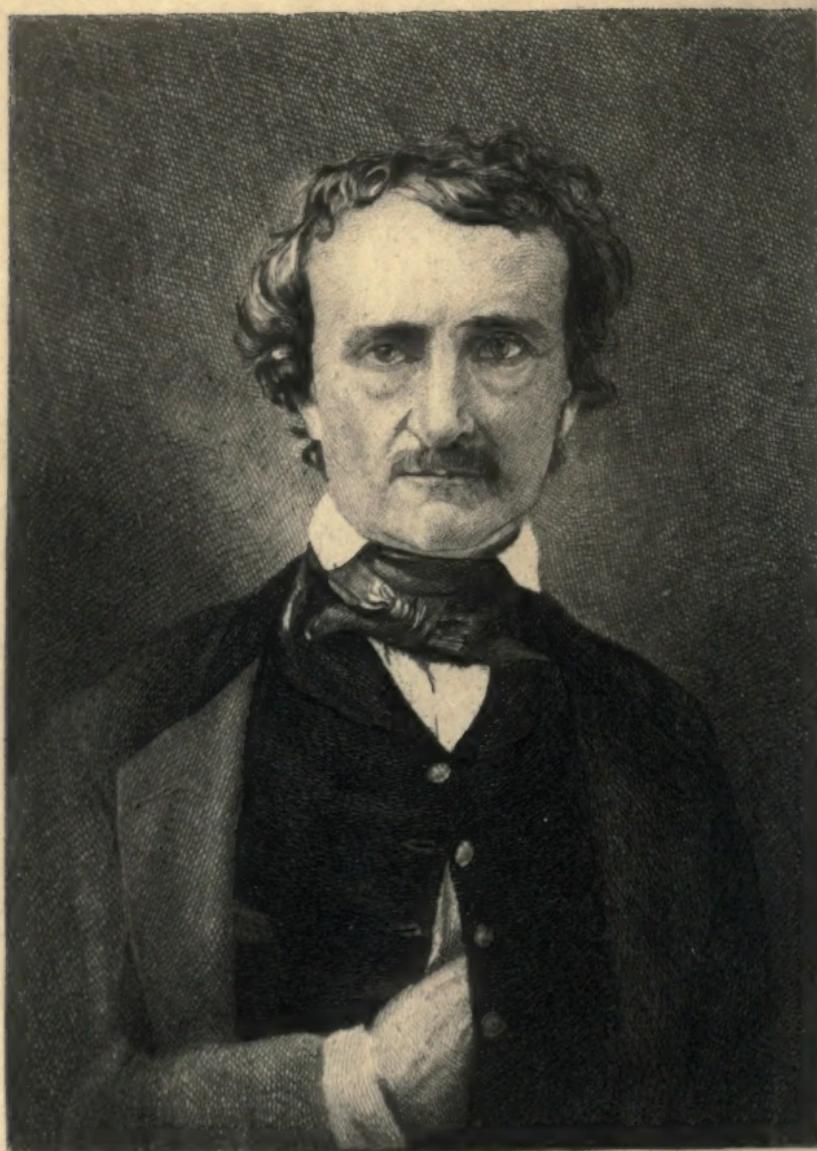
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COMPLETE WORKS

of

Edgar Allan Poe

10 VOLUMES

VOLUME VII.

CRITICISMS

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CRITICISMS



Robert M. Bird

BY *The Gladiator*, by *Calavar*, and by *The Infidel*, Dr. Bird has risen, in a comparatively short space of time, to a very enviable reputation; and we have heard it asserted that his novel, *The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow*,¹ will not fail to place his name in the very first rank of American writers of fiction. Without venturing to subscribe implicitly to this latter supposition, we still think very highly of him who has written *Calavar*.

Had this novel reached us some years ago, with the title of "*The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow: A Romance by the author of Waverley*," we should not perhaps have engaged in its perusal with as much genuine eagerness, or so dogged a determination to be pleased with it, at all events, as we have actually done upon receiving it with its proper title, and under really existing circumstances. But having read the book through, as

¹ *The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow: A Tradition of Pennsylvania.* By the author of *Calavar*, and *The Infidel*. Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard.

undoubtedly we should have done, if only for the sake of auld lang syne, and for the sake of certain pleasantly mirthful or pleasantly mournful recollections connected with *Ivanhoe*, with *The Antiquary*, with *Kenilworth*, and above all, with that most pure, perfect, and radiant gem of fictitious literature, *The Bride of Lammermoor*,—having, we say, on this account, and for the sake of these recollections, read the novel from beginning to end, from aleph to tau, we should have pronounced our opinion of its merits in the following manner:

“ It is unnecessary to tell us that this novel is written by Sir Walter Scott; and we are really glad to find that he has at length ventured to turn his attention to American incidents, scenery, and manners. We repeat that it was a mere act of supererogation to place the words ‘ By the author of *Waverley*,’ in the title-page. The book speaks for itself. The style vulgarly so-called, the manner properly so-called, the handling of the subject, to speak pictorially, or graphically, or, as a German would say, plastically,—in a word, the general air, the *tout ensemble*, the prevailing character of the story, all proclaim, in words which one who runs may read, that these volumes were indited ‘ By the author of *Waverley*.’ ” Having said thus much we should resume our critique as follows: “ *The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow* is, however, by no means in the best manner of its illustrious author. To speak plainly, it

Robert M. Bird

is a positive failure, and must take its place by the side of the *Redgauntlets*, the *Monasteries*, the *Pirates*, and the *Saint Ronan's Wells*."

All this we should, perhaps, have been induced to say had the book been offered to us for perusal some few years ago, with the supposititious title, and under the supposititious circumstances aforesaid. But, alas for our critical independency the case is very different indeed. There can be no mistake or misconception in the present instance, such as we have so fancifully imagined. The title-page (here we have it) is clear, explanatory, and not to be misunderstood. *The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow: A Tradition of Pennsylvania*, that is to say, a novel, is written, so we are assured, not by the author of *Waverley*, but by the author of that very fine romance, *Calavar*; not by Sir Walter Scott, Baronet, but by Robert M. Bird, M.D. Now Robert M. Bird is an American.

In regard to that purely mechanical portion of this novel, which it would now be fashionable to denominate its style, we have very few observations to make. In general it is faultless. Occasionally we meet with a sentence ill-constructed, an inartificial adaptation of the end to the beginning of a paragraph, a circumlocutory mode of saying what might have been better said, if said with brevity; now and then with a pleonasm, as, for example, "And if he wore a mask in his commerce with men, it was like that iron one of the

Bastile, which when put on, was put on for life, and was at the same time of iron ; ” not unfrequently with a bull proper, videlicet, “ As he spoke there came into the den, eight men attired like the two first who were included in the number.” But we repeat that upon the whole the style of the novel, if that may be called its style which style is not, is at least equal to that of any American writer whatsoever. In the style properly so-called, that is to say, in the prevailing tone and manner which give character and individuality to the book, we cannot bring ourselves to think that Dr. Bird has been equally fortunate. His subject appears always ready to fly away from him. He dallies with it continually, hovers incessantly round it and about it, and not till driven to exertion by the necessity of bringing his volumes to a close does he finally grasp it with any appearance of energy or good-will. *The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow* is composed with great inequality of manner, at times forcible and manly, at times sinking into the merest childishness and imbecility. Some portions of the book, we surmise, were either not written by Dr. Bird, or were written by him in moments of the most utter mental exhaustion. On the other hand, the reader will not be disappointed if he looks to find in the novel many, very many, well-sustained passages of great eloquence and beauty.

The Hawks of Hawk-Hollow, if it add a single bay to the already green wreath of Dr. Bird’s popular reputa-

Robert M. Bird

tion, will not, at all events among men whose decisions are entitled to consideration, advance the high opinion previously entertained of his abilities. It has no pretensions to originality of manner or of style,—for we insist upon the distinction,—and very few to originality of matter. It is, in many respects, a bad imitation of Sir Walter Scott. Some of its characters, and one or two of its incidents, have seldom been surpassed for force, fidelity to nature, and power of exciting interest in the reader. It is altogether more worthy of its author in its scenes of hurry, of tumult, and confusion than in those of a more quiet and philosophical nature. Like *Calavar* and *The Infidel*, it excels in the drama of action and passion, and fails in the drama of colloquy. It is inferior, as a whole, to *The Infidel*, and vastly inferior to *Calavar*.

We must regard *Sheppard Lee*, upon the whole, as a very clever, and not altogether unoriginal, *jeu d'esprit*. Its incidents are well conceived, and related with force, brevity, and a species of directness which is invaluable in certain cases of narration, while in others it should be avoided. The language is exceedingly unaffected and (what we regard as high praise) exceedingly well adapted to the varying subjects. Some fault may be found with the conception of the metempsychosis which is the basis of the narrative. There are two general methods of telling stories such

as this. One of these methods is that adopted by the author of *Sheppard Lee*. He conceives his hero endowed with some idiosyncrasy beyond the common lot of human nature, and thus introduces him to a series of adventures which, under ordinary circumstances, could occur only to a plurality of persons. The chief source of interest in such narrative is, or should be, the contrasting of these varied events, in their influence upon a character unchanging, except as changed by the events themselves. This fruitful field of interest, however, is neglected in the novel before us, where the hero, very awkwardly, partially loses, and partially does not lose, his identity at each transmigration. The sole object here in the various metempsychoses seems to be, merely the depicting of seven different conditions of existence, and the enforcement of the very doubtful moral that every person should remain contented with his own. But it is clear that both these points could have been more forcibly shown, without any reference to a confused and jarring system of transmigration, by the mere narrations of seven different individuals. All deviations, especially wide ones, from nature, should be justified to the author by some specific object; the object, in the present case, might have been found, as above mentioned, in the opportunity afforded of depicting widely different conditions of existence actuating one individual.

A second peculiarity of the species of novel to which

Sheppard Lee belongs, and a peculiarity which is not rejected by the author, is the treating the whole narrative in a jocular manner throughout (inasmuch as to say, "I know I am writing nonsense, but then you must excuse me for the very reason that I know it"), or the solution of the various absurdities by means of a dream or something similar. The latter method is adopted in the present instance, and the idea is managed with unusual ingenuity. Still, having read through the whole book, and having been worried to death with incongruities (allowing such to exist) until the concluding page, it is certainly little indemnification for our sufferings to learn that, in truth, the whole matter was a dream, and that we were very wrong in being worried about it at all. The damage is done and the apology does not remedy the grievance. For this and other reasons we are led to prefer, in this kind of writing, the second general method to which we have alluded. It consists in a variety of points: principally in avoiding, as may easily be done, that directness of expression which we have noticed in *Sheppard Lee*, and thus leaving much to the imagination; in writing as if the author were firmly impressed with the truth, yet astonished at the immensity of the wonders he relates, and for which, professedly, he neither claims nor anticipates credence in minuteness of detail, especially upon points which have no immediate bearing upon the general story, this minuteness not being at variance

with indirectness of expression; in short, by making use of the infinity of arts which give verisimilitude to a narration, and by leaving the result as a wonder not to be accounted for. It will be found that *bizarre series* thus conducted are usually far more effective than those otherwise managed. The attention of the author, who does not depend upon explaining away his incredibilities, is directed to giving them the character and the luminousness of truth; and thus are brought about, unwittingly, some of the most vivid creations of human intellect. The reader, too, readily perceives and falls in with the writer's humor, and suffers himself to be borne on thereby. On the other hand, what difficulty, or inconvenience, or danger can there be in leaving us uninformed of the important facts that a certain hero did not actually discover the *elixir vitae*, could not really make himself really invisible, and was not either a ghost in good earnest or a bona fide wandering Jew?





Robert Walsh

HAVING read Mr. Walsh's *Didactics* with much attention and pleasure, I am prepared to admit that he is one of the finest writers, one of the most accomplished scholars, and, when not in too great a hurry, one of the most accurate thinkers in the country. Yet had I never seen this work I should never have entertained these opinions. Mr. Walsh has been peculiarly an anonymous writer, and has thus been instrumental in cheating himself of a great portion of that literary renown which is most unequivocally his due. I have been not unfrequently astonished in the perusal of this book at meeting with a variety of well-known and highly esteemed acquaintances, for whose paternity I had been accustomed to give credit where I now find it should not have been given. Among these I may mention in especial the very excellent essay on the acting of Kean, entitled

"Notices of Kean's Principal Performances during his First Season in Philadelphia," to be found at page 146, volume I. I have often thought of the unknown author of this essay, as of one to whom I might speak, if occasion should at any time be granted me, with a perfect certainty of being understood. I have looked to the article itself as to a fair oasis in the general blankness and futility of our customary theatrical notices. I read it with that thrill of pleasure with which I always welcome my own long-cherished opinions, when I meet them unexpectedly in the language of another. How absolute is the necessity, now daily growing, of rescuing our stage criticism from the control of illiterate mountebanks, and placing it in the hands of gentlemen and scholars!

The paper on "Collegiate Education" is much more than a sufficient reply to that essay in the *Old Bachelor* of Mr. Wirt, in which the attempt is made to argue down colleges as seminaries for the young. Mr. Walsh's article does not uphold Mr. Barlow's plan of a national university, a plan which is assailed by the Attorney-General, but comments upon some errors in point of fact, and enters into a brief but comprehensive examination of the general subject. He maintains with undeniable truth that it is illogical to deduce arguments against universities which are to exist at the present day, from the inconveniences found to be connected with institutions formed in the dark ages,

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—institutions similar to our own in but few respects, modelled upon the principles and prejudices of the times, organized with a view to particular ecclesiastical purposes, and confined in their operations by an infinity of Gothic and perplexing regulations. He thinks (and I believe he thinks with a great majority of our well-educated fellow-citizens) that in the case either of a great national institute or of State universities, nearly all the difficulties so much insisted upon will prove a series of mere chimeras; that the evils apprehended might be readily obviated and the acknowledged benefits uninterruptedly secured. He denies, very justly, the assertion of the *Old Bachelor*, that, in the progress of society, funds for collegiate establishments will no doubt be accumulated, independently of government, when their benefits are evident, and a necessity for them felt, and that the rich who have funds will, whenever strongly impressed with the necessity of so doing, provide, either by associations or otherwise, proper seminaries for the education of their children. He shows that these assertions are contradictory to experience, and more particularly to the experience of the State of Virginia, where, notwithstanding the extent of private opulence, and the disadvantages under which the community so long labored from a want of regular and systematic instruction, it was the Government which was finally compelled, and not private societies which were induced,

to provide establishments for effecting the great end. He says (and therein we must all fully agree with him) that Virginia may consider herself fortunate in following the example of all the enlightened nations of modern times rather than in hearkening to the counsels of the *Old Bachelor*. He dissents (and who would not?) from the allegation that "the most eminent men in Europe, particularly in England, have received their education neither at public schools nor universities," and shows that the very reverse may be affirmed; that on the continent of Europe by far the greater number of its great names have been attached to the rolls of its universities; and that in England a vast majority of those minds which we have reverenced so long—the Bacons, the Newtons, the Barrows, the Clarks, the Spencers, the Miltos, the Drydens, the Addisons, the Temples, the Hales, the Clarendons, the Mansfields, Chatham, Pitt, Fox, Wyndham, etc.—were educated among the venerable cloisters of Oxford or of Cambridge. He cites the "Oxford Prize Essays," so well known even in America, as direct evidence of the energetic ardor in acquiring knowledge brought about through the means of British universities, and maintains that "when attention is given to the subsequent public stations and labors of most of the writers of these 'Essays,' it will be found that they prove also the ultimate practical utility of the literary discipline of the colleges for the students and the nation." He argues,

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that, were it even true that the greatest men have not been educated in public schools, the fact would have little to do with the question of their efficacy in the instruction of the mass of mankind. Great men cannot be created, and are usually independent of all particular schemes of education. Public seminaries are best adapted to the generality of cases. He concludes with observing that the course of study pursued at English universities is more liberal by far than we are willing to suppose it; that it is, demonstrably, the best, inasmuch as regards the preference given to classical and mathematical knowledge, and that upon the whole it would be an easy matter, in transferring to America the general principles of those institutions, to leave them their obvious errors, while we avail ourselves as we best may of their still more obvious virtues and advantages.

The only paper in the *Didactics* to which I have any decided objection is a tolerably long article on the subject of phrenology, entitled "Memorial of the Phrenological Society of — to the Honorable the Congress of — Sitting at —." Considered as a specimen of mere burlesque, the "Memorial" is well enough, but I am sorry to see the energies of a scholar and an editor (who should be, if he be not, a man of metaphysical science) so wickedly employed as in any attempt to throw ridicule upon a question (however much maligned, or however apparently ridiculous) whose

Robert Walsh

merits he has never examined, and of whose very nature, history, and assumptions, he is most evidently ignorant. Mr. Walsh is either ashamed of this article now, or he will have plentiful reason to be ashamed of it hereafter.





Magazine-Writing—"Peter Snook"

N a late number of the *Democratic Review*, there appeared a very excellent paper by Mr. Duyckinck on the subject of Magazine Literature, a subject much less thoroughly comprehended here than either in France or in England. In America, we compose, now and then, agreeable essays and other matters of that character, but we have not yet caught the true magazine spirit,—a thing neither to be defined nor described. Mr. Duyckinck's article, although piquant, is not altogether to our mind. We think he places too low an estimate on the capability of the magazine paper. He is inclined to undervalue its power, to limit unnecessarily its province, which is illimitable. In fact, it is in the extent of subject, and not less in the extent or variety of tone, that the French and English surpass us to so good a purpose. How very rarely are we struck with an American

magazine article as with an absolute novelty; how frequently the foreign articles so affect us! We are so circumstanced as to be unable to pay for elaborate compositions; and, after all, the true invention is elaborate. There is no greater mistake than the supposition that a true originality is a mere matter of impulse or inspiration. To originate is carefully, patiently, and understandingly to combine. The few American magazinists who ever think of this elaboration at all cannot afford to carry it into practice for the paltry prices offered them by our periodical publishers. For this and other glaring reasons, we are behind the age in a very important branch of literature, a branch which, moreover, is daily growing in importance, and which, in the end (not far distant), will be the most influential of all the departments of letters.

We are lamentably deficient, not only in invention proper, but in that which is, more strictly, art. What American, for instance, in penning a criticism, ever supposes himself called upon to present his readers with more than the exact stipulation of his title—to present them with a criticism and something beyond? Who thinks of making his critique a work of art itself, independently of its critical opinions? a work of art, such as are all the more elaborate, and most effective reviews of Macaulay? Yet these reviews we have evinced no incapacity to appreciate, when presented.

Magazine-Writing—“Peter Snook”

The best American review ever penned is miserably ineffective when compared with the notice of Montagu's *Bacon*; and yet this latter is, in general, a piece of tawdry sophistry, owing everything to a consummate, to an exquisite arrangement; to a thorough and just sufficiently comprehensive diffuseness; to a masterly climaxing of points; to a style which dazzles the understanding with its brilliancy, but not more than it misleads it by its perspicuity, causing us so distinctly to comprehend that we fancy we coincide; in a word, to the perfection of art, of all the art which a Macaulay can wield, or which is applicable to any criticism that a Macaulay could write.

It is, however, in the composition of that class of magazine papers which come, properly, under the head of Tales, that we evince the most remarkable deficiency in skill. If we except, first, Mr. Hawthorne, secondly, Mr. Simms, thirdly, Mr. Willis, and, fourthly, one or two others, whom we may as well put mentally together without naming them, there is not even a respectably skilful writer on this side of the Atlantic. We have seen, to be sure, many very well-constructed stories, individual specimens, the work of American magazinists; but these specimens have invariably appeared to be happy accidents of construction, their authors, in subsequent tales, having always evinced an incapacity to construct.

We have been led to a comparison of the American

with the British ability in tale-writing by a perusal of some magazine papers, the composition of the author of *Chartley*, and *The Invisible Gentleman*. He is one of the best of the English journalists, and has some of the happiest peculiarities of Dickens whom he preceded in the popular favor. The longest and best of his tales, properly so called, is *Peter Snook*, and this presents so many striking points for the consideration of the magazinist, that we feel disposed to give an account of it in full.

Peter Snook, the hero, and the beau-ideal of a Cockney, is a retail linen-draper in Bishopgate Street. He is, of course, a stupid and conceited, although at bottom, a very good little fellow, and "always looks as if he was frightened." Matters go on very thrivingly with him, until he becomes acquainted with Miss Clarinda Bodkin, "a young lady owning to almost thirty, and withal a great proficient in the mysteries of millinery and mantua-making." Love and ambition, however, set the little gentleman somewhat beside himself. "If Miss Clarinda would but have me," says he, "we might divide the shop, and have a linen-drapery side, and a haberdashery and millinery side, and one would help the other. There 'd be only one rent to pay, and a double business,—and it would be so comfortable too!" Thinking thus, Peter commences a flirtation, to which Miss Clarinda but doubtfully responds. He escorts the lady to White Conduit

Magazine-Writing—“Peter Snook”

House, Bagnigge Wells, and other genteel places of public resort, and, finally, is so rash as to accede to the proposition, on her part, of a trip to Margate. At this epoch of the narrative, the writer observes that the subsequent proceedings of the hero are gathered from accounts rendered by himself, when called upon, after the trip, for explanation.

It is agreed that Miss Clarinda shall set out alone for Margate, Mr. Snook following her, after some indispensable arrangements. These occupy him until the middle of July, at which period, taking passage in the *Rose in June*, he safely reaches his destination. But various misfortunes here await him, misfortunes admirably adapted to the meridian of Cockney feeling, and the capacity of Cockney endurance. His umbrella, for example, and a large brown-paper parcel, containing a new pea-green coat and flower-patterned embroidered silk waistcoat, are tumbled into the water at the landing-place, and Miss Bodkin forbids him her presence in his old clothes. By a tumble of his own, too, the skin is rubbed from both his shins for several inches, and the surgeon, having no regard to the lover's cotillon engagements, enjoins on him a total abstinence from dancing. A cockchafer, moreover, is at the trouble of flying into one of his eyes, and (worse than all) a tall, military-looking shoemaker, Mr. Last, has taken advantage of the linen-draper's delay in reaching Margate, to ingratiate himself with

Magazine-Writing—"Peter Snook"

his mistress. Finally he is cut by Last, and rejected by the lady, and has nothing left for it but to secure a homeward passage in the *Rose in June*.

In the evening of the second day after his departure, the vessel drops anchor off Greenwich. Most of the passengers go ashore, with the view of taking the stage to the city. Peter, however, who considers that he has already spent money enough to no purpose, prefers remaining on board. "We shall get to Billingsgate," says he, "while I am sleeping, and I shall have plenty of time to go home and dress, and go into the city and borrow the trifle I may want for Pester & Co.'s bill, that comes due the day after to-morrow." This determination is a source of much trouble to our hero, as will be seen in the sequel. Some shopmen who remain with him in the packet tempt him to unusual indulgences, in the way, first, of brown stout, and, secondly, of positive French brandy. The consequence is that Mr. Snook falls, thirdly, asleep, and, fourthly, overboard.

About dawn on the morning after this event, Ephraim Hobson, the confidential clerk and factotum of Mr. Peter Snook, is disturbed from a sound sleep by the sudden appearance of his master. That gentleman seems to be quite in a bustle, and delights Ephraim with an account of a whacking wholesale order for exportation just received. "Not a word to anybody about the matter!" exclaims Peter, with unusual

Magazine-Writing—“Peter Snook”

emphasis. “It’s such an opportunity as don’t come often in a man’s lifetime. There’s a captain of a ship, he’s the owner of her too; but never mind! there ain’t time to enter into particulars now, but you’ll know all by and by; all you have to do is to do as I tell you; so, come along!”

Setting Ephraim to work, with directions to pack up immediately all the goods in the shop, with the exception of a few trifling articles, the master avows his intention of going into the city, “to borrow enough money to make up Pester’s bill, due to-morrow.” “I don’t think you’ll want much, sir,” replied Mr. Hobson, with a self-complacent air. “I’ve been looking about long-winded ‘uns, you see, since you’ve been gone, and I’ve got Shy’s money and Slack’s account, which we’d pretty well given up for a bad job, and one or two more. There, there’s the list, and there’s the key to the strong box, where you’ll find the money, besides what I’ve took at the counter.” Peter, at this, seems well pleased, and shortly afterward goes out, saying he cannot tell when he’ll be back, and giving directions that whatever goods may be sent in during his absence shall be left untouched till his return.

It appears that, after leaving his shop, Mr. Snook proceeded to that of Jobb, Flashbill & Co. (one of whose clerks, on board the *Rose in June*, had been very liberal in supplying our hero with brandy on the

night of his ducking), looked over a large quantity of ducks and other goods, and finally made purchase of “a choice assortment,” to be delivered the same day. His next visit was to Mr. Bluff, the managing partner in the banking-house where he usually kept his cash. His business now was to request permission to over-draw a hundred pounds for a few days.

“‘Humph!’ said Mr. Bluff, ‘money is very scarce; but, bless me! yes, it’s he! Excuse me a minute, Mr. Snook; there’s a gentleman at the front counter whom I want particularly to speak to; I’ll be back with you directly.’ As he uttered these words, he rushed out, and in passing one of the clerks on his way forward, he whispered: ‘Tell Scribe to look at Snook’s account, and let me know directly.’ He then went to the front counter, where several people were waiting to pay and receive money. ‘Fine weather this, Mr. Butt. What! you’re not out of town like the rest of them?’

“‘No,’ replied Mr. Butt, who kept a thriving gin-shop, ‘no, I sticks to my business; make hay while the sun shines,—that’s my maxim. Wife up at night, I up early in the morning.’

“The banker chatted and listened with great apparent interest, till the closing of a huge book, on which he kept his eye, told him that his whispered order had been attended to. He then took a gracious leave of Mr. Butt, and returned back to the counting-house

Magazine-Writing—“Peter Snook”

with a slip of paper, adroitly put in his hand while passing, on which was written, ‘Peter Snook, Linen-Draper, Bishopgate Street, old account, increasing gradually, balance: £153 15s. 6d.—very regular.’ ‘Sorry to keep you waiting, Mr. Snook,’ said he, ‘but we must catch people when we can. Well, what is it you were saying you wanted us to do?’

“‘I should like to be able to overdraw just for a few days,’ said Peter.

“‘How much?’

“‘A hundred.’

“‘Won’t fifty do?’

“‘No, not quite, sir.’

“‘Well, you’re an honest fellow, and don’t come bothering us often; so, I suppose we must not be too particular with you for this once.’”

Leaving Bluff, Mr. Snook hurries to overtake Mr. Butt, the dealer in spirits, who had just left the banking-house before himself, and to give that gentleman an order for a hogshead of the best gin. As he is personally unknown to Mr. Butt, he hands him a card, on which is written: “Peter Snook, linen and muslin warehouse, No.—, Bishopgate Street, within,” etc., etc., and takes occasion to mention that he purchases at the recommendation of Mr. Bluff. The gin is to be at Queenhithe the same evening. The spirit-dealer, as soon as his new customer has taken leave, revolves in his mind the oddity of a linen-draper’s

buying a hogshead of gin, and determines to satisfy himself of Mr. Snook's responsibility by a personal application to Mr. Bluff. On reaching the bank, however, he is told by the clerks that Mr. Bluff, being in attendance upon a committee of the House of Commons, will not be home in any reasonable time; but also that Peter Snook is a perfectly safe man. The gin is accordingly sent, and several other large orders for different goods, upon other houses, are promptly fulfilled in the same manner. Meantime Ephraim is busily engaged at home in receiving and inspecting the invoices of the various purchases as they arrive, at which employment he is occupied until dusk, when his master makes his appearance in unusually high spirits. We must here be pardoned for copying some passages:

“ ‘ Well, Ephraim,’ he exclaimed, ‘ this looks something like business. You have n't had such a job this many a day! Shop looks well now, eh ? ’

“ ‘ You know best, sir,’ replied Hobson. ‘ But hang me if I an't frightened. When we shall sell all these goods, I 'm sure I can't think. You talked of having a haberdashery side to the shop; but if we go on at this rate we shall want another side for ourselves. I 'm sure I don't know where Miss Bodkin is to be put.’

“ ‘ She go to Jericho! ’ said Peter, contemptuously. ‘ As for the goods, my boy, they 'll be gone before to-morrow morning. All you and I have got to do

Magazine-Writing—“Peter Snook”

is to pack 'em up; so let us turn to, and strap at it.'

“Packing was Ephraim's favorite employment, but, on the present occasion, he set to work with a heavy heart. His master, on the contrary, appeared full of life and spirits, and corded boxes, sewed up trusses, and packed huge paper parcels with a celerity and an adroitness truly wonderful.

“‘Why don't you get on, Hobson?’ he exclaimed; ‘see what I have done! Where's the ink-pot?—oh, here it is!’ and he proceeded to mark his packages with his initials, and the letter G below. ‘There,’ he resumed, ‘P. S. G.; that's for me, at Gravesend. I'm to meet the captain and owner there, show the goods—if there's any he don't like, shall bring 'em back with me; get bills, banker's acceptances for the rest; see 'em safe on board; then,—but not before, mind that, Master Ephraim! No, no, keep my weather eye open, as the men say on board the *Rose in June*. By the bye, I have n't told you yet about my falling overboard, whap into the river.’

“‘Falling overboard!’ exclaimed the astonished shopman, quitting his occupation to stand erect to listen.

“‘Ay, ay,’ continued Peter; ‘see it won't do to tell you long stories now. There, mark that truss, will you? Know all about it some day. Lucky job, though, tell you that: got this thundering order by

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it. Had one tumble, first, going off, at Margate. Spoilt my pea-green: never mind, that was a lucky tumble, too. Had n’t been for that, should n’t so soon have found out the game a certain person was playing with me. She go to Jericho! ’

“But for the frequent repetition of his favorite expression, Ephraim Hobson has since declared he should have doubted his master’s identity during the whole of that evening, as there was something very singular about him, and his strength and activity in moving the bales, boxes, and trusses were such as he had never previously exhibited. The phrase condemning this, that, or the other thing or person to ‘go to Jericho,’ was the only expression that he uttered, as the shopman said, ‘naturally,’ and Peter repeated that whimsical anathema as often as usual.”

The goods being all packed up, carts arrive to carry them away; and by half-past ten o’clock the shop is entirely cleared, with the exception of some trifling articles to make show on the shelves and counters. Two hackney coaches are called. Mr. Peter Snook gets into one with a variety of loose articles, which would require too much time to pack, and his shopman into another with some more. Arriving at Queenhithe, they find all the goods previously sent already embarked in the hold of a long-decked barge, which lies near the shore. Mr. Snook now insists upon Ephraim’s going on board, and taking supper and some hot rum

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and water. This advice he follows to so good purpose, that he is, at length, completely bewildered, when his master, taking him up in his arms, carries him on shore, and there, setting him down, leaves him to make the best of his way home as he can.

About eight the next morning, Ephraim, awaking, of course, in a sad condition, both of mind and body, sets himself immediately about arranging the appearance of the shop, “so as to secure the credit of the concern.” In spite of all his ingenuity, however, it maintains a poverty-stricken appearance, which circumstance excites some most unreasonable suspicions in the mind of Mr. Bluff’s clerk, upon his calling at ten, with Pester & Co.’s bill (three hundred and sixteen pounds, seventeen shillings), and receiving, by way of payment, a check upon his own banking-house for that amount, Mr. Snook having written this check before his departure with the goods, and left it with Ephraim. On reaching the bank, therefore, the clerk inquires if Mr. Peter Snook’s check is good for three hundred and sixteen pounds odd, and is told that it is not worth a farthing, Mr. S. having overdrawn for a hundred. While Mr. Bluff and his assistants are conversing on the subject, Butt, the gin-dealer, calls to thank the banker for having recommended him a customer, which the banker denies having done. An explanation ensues, and “Stop thief!” is the cry. Ephraim is sent for, and reluctantly made to tell all

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he knows of his master's proceedings on the day before, by which means a knowledge is obtained of the other houses, who (it is supposed) have been swindled. Getting a description of the barge which conveyed the goods from Queenhithe, the whole party of the creditors now set off in pursuit.

About dawn the next morning they overtake the barge, a little below Gravesend, when four men are observed leaving her, and rowing to the shore in a skiff. Peter Snook is found sitting quietly in the cabin, and, although apparently a little surprised at seeing Mr. Pester, betrays nothing like embarrassment or fear.

“‘Ah, Mr. Pester! is it you? Glad to see you, sir. So you 've been taking a trip out o' town, and are going back with us? We shall get to Billingsgate between eight and nine, they say; and I hope it won't be later, as I 've a bill of yours comes due to-day, and I want to be at home in time to write a check for it.’”

The goods are also found on board, together with three men in the hold, gagged, and tied hand and foot. They give a strange account of themselves. Being in the employ of Mr. Heaviside, a lighterman, they were put in charge of *The Flitter*, when she was hired by Peter Snook, for a trip to Gravesend. According to their orders, they took the barge, in the first instance, to a wharf near Queenhithe, and helped to load her with some goods brought down in carts. Mr. Snook

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afterward came on board, bringing with him two fierce-looking men, and “a little man with a hooked nose” (Ephraim.) Mr. S. and the little man then “had a sort of jollification” in the cabin, till the latter got drunk and was carried ashore. They then proceeded down the river, nothing particular occurring till they had passed Greenwich Hospital, when Mr. S. ordered them to lay the barge alongside a large black-sided ship. No sooner was the order obeyed than they were boarded by a number of men from said ship, who seized them, bound them, gagged them, and put them in the hold.

The immediate consequence of this information is, that Peter is bound, gagged, and put down into the hold in the same manner, by way of retaliation, and for safe keeping on his way back to the city. On the arrival of the party, a meeting of the creditors is called. Peter appears before them in a great rage, and with the air of an injured man. Indeed, his behavior is so *mal à propos* to his situation as entirely to puzzle his interrogators. He accuses the whole party of a conspiracy.

“‘Peter Snook,’ said Mr. Pester, solemnly, from the chair, ‘that look does not become you after what has passed. Let me advise you to conduct yourself with propriety. You will find it the best policy, depend on ’t.’

“‘A pretty thing for you, for to come to talk of propriety!’ exclaimed Peter; ‘you, that seed me

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laid hold on by a set of ruffians, and never said a word, nor given information a'terwards! And here have I been kept away from business I don't know how long, and shut up like a dog in a kennel; but I look upon 't you were at the bottom of it all; you and that fellow with the plum-pudding face, as blowed me up about a cask of gin! What you both mean by it, I can't think; but if there's any law in the land, I'll make you remember it, both of you; that's what I will.' "

Mr. Snook swears that he never saw Jobb in his life, except on the occasion of his capture in *The Flitter*, and positively denies having looked out any parcel of goods at the house of Jobb, Flashbill & Co. With the banker, Mr. Bluff, he acknowledges an acquaintance, but not having drawn for the two hundred and seventy pounds odd, or having ever overdrawn for a shilling in his life. Moreover, he is clearly of opinion that the banker has still in his hands more than a hundred and fifty pounds of his (Mr. Snook's) money. He can designate several gentlemen as being creditors of his, although they were of the number of those from whom his purchases had been made for the "whacking" shipping order, and although their goods were found in *The Flitter*. Ephraim is summoned, and testifies to all the particulars of his master's return, and the subsequent packing, cart-loading, and embarkation as already told, accounting for the extra-

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gances of Mr. Snook as being “all along of that Miss Bodkin.”

“‘Lor’, master, hi’s glad to see you agin,’ exclaimed Ephraim. ‘Who’d ha’ thought as ’t would come to this?’

“‘Come to what?’ cried Peter. ‘I’ll make ‘em repent of it, every man Jack of ‘em, before I’ve done, if there’s law to be had for love or money!’

“‘Ah, sir,’ said Ephraim, ‘we’d better have stuck to the retail. I was afraid that shipping consarn would n’t answer, and tell’d you so, if you recollect, but you would n’t hearken to me.’

“‘What shipping concern?’ inquired Peter, with a look of amazement.

“‘La! master,’ exclaimed Ephraim, ‘it ain’t of any use to pretend to keep it a secret now, when everybody knows it. I did n’t tell Mr. Pester, though, till the last, when all the goods was gone out of the shop, and the sheriff’s officers had come to take possession of the house.’

“‘Sheriff’s officers in possession of my house!’ roared Peter. ‘All the goods gone out of the shop! What do you mean by that, you rascal! What have you been doing in my absence?’ And he sprang forward furiously, and seized the trembling shopman by the collar with a degree of violence which rendered it difficult for the two officers in attendance to disengage him from his hold.”

Hereupon, Mr. Snap, the attorney retained by the creditors, harangues the company at some length, and intimates that Mr. Snook is either mad or acting the madman for the purpose of evading punishment. A practitioner from Bedlam is sent for, and some artifices resorted to, but to no purpose. It is found impossible to decide upon the question of sanity. The medical gentleman, in his report to the creditors, confesses himself utterly perplexed, and, without giving a decision, details the particulars of a singular story told him by Mr. Snook himself, concerning the mode of his escape from drowning after he fell overboard from the *Rose in June*. “It is a strange, unlikely tale, to be sure,” says the physician, “and if his general conversation was of that wild, imaginative, flighty kind which I have so often witnessed, I should say it was purely ideal; but he appears such a plain-spoken, simple sort of a person, that it is difficult to conceive how he could invent such a fiction.” Mr. Snook’s narration is then told, not in his very words, but in the author’s own way, with all the particulars obtained from Peter’s various recitations. We give it only in brief.

Upon tumbling overboard, Mr. Snook (at least according to his own story) swam courageously as long as he could. He was upon the point of sinking, however, when an oar was thrust under his arm, and he found himself lifted in a boat by a “dozen dark-

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looking men.” He is taken on board a large ship, and the captain, who is a droll genius, and talks in rhyme somewhat after the fashion of the wondrous *Tale of Alroy*, entertains him with great cordiality, dresses him in a suit of his own clothes, makes him drink, in the first place, a brimmer of “something hot,” and afterward plies him with wines and cordials of all kinds, at a supper of the most magnificent description. Warmed in body and mind by this excellent cheer, Peter reveals his inmost secrets to his host, and talks freely and minutely of a thousand things,—of his man Ephraim and his oddities; of his bank account; of his great credit; of his adventures with Miss Bodkin; of his prospects in trade; and especially of the names, residences, etc., etc., of the wholesale houses with whom he is in the habit of dealing. Presently, being somewhat overcome with wine, he goes to bed at the suggestion of the captain, who promises to call him in season for a boat in the morning, which will convey him to Billingsgate in full time for Pester and Co.’s note. How long he slept is uncertain, but when he awoke a great change was observable in the captain’s manner, who was somewhat brusque, and handed him over the ship’s side into the barge, where he was discovered by the creditors in pursuit, and which he was assured would convey him to Billingsgate.

This relation, thus succinctly given by us, implies

little or nothing. The result, however, to which the reader is ingeniously led by the author, is, that the real Peter Snook has been duped, and that the Peter Snook who made the various purchases about town, and who appeared to Ephraim only during the morning and evening twilight of the eventful day, was, in fact, no other person than the captain of “the strange, black-sided ship.” We are to believe that, taking advantage of Peter’s communicativeness, and a certain degree of personal resemblance to himself, he assumed our hero’s clothes while he slept, and made a bold and nearly successful attempt at wholesale peculation.

The incidents of this story are forcibly conceived, and even in the hands of an ordinary writer would scarcely fail of effect. But, in the present instance, so unusual a tact is developed in the narration, that we are inclined to rank *Peter Snook* among the few tales which (each in its own way) are absolutely faultless. It is a Flemish home-piece of the highest order, its merits lying in its chiaroscuro, in that blending of light and shade and shadow, where nothing is too distinct, yet where the idea is fully conveyed—in the absence of all rigid outlines and all miniature painting—in the not undue warmth of the coloring, and in a well-subdued exaggeration at all points, an exaggeration never amounting to caricature.



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R. IRVING'S acquaintance at Montreal, many years since, with some of the principal partners of the great Northwest Fur Company, was the means of interesting him deeply in the varied concerns of trappers, hunters, and Indians, and in all the adventurous details connected with the commerce in peltries. Not long after his return from his late tour to the prairies, he held a conversation with his friend, Mr. John Jacob Astor, of New York, in relation to an enterprise set on foot and conducted by that gentleman, about the year 1812,—an enterprise having for its object a participation, on the most extensive scale, in the fur trade carried on with the Indians in all the western and northwestern regions of North America. Finding Mr. Irving fully alive to the exciting interest of this subject, Mr. Astor was induced to express a regret that the true nature and extent of the enterprise, together with its great national character

¹*Astoria; or, Anecdotes of an Enterprise beyond the Rocky Mountains.* By Washington Irving. From the *Southern Literary Messenger* for 18—.

and importance, had never been generally comprehended; and a wish that Mr. Irving would undertake to give an account of it. To this he consented. All the papers relative to the matter were submitted to his inspection; and the volumes now before us (two well-sized octavos) are the result. The work has been accomplished in a masterly manner, the modesty of the title affording no indication of the fulness, comprehensiveness, and beauty with which a long and entangled series of detail, collected necessarily from a mass of vague and imperfect data, has been wrought into completeness and unity.

Supposing our readers acquainted with the main features of the original fur trade in America, we shall not follow Mr. Irving in his vivid account of the primitive French Canadian merchant, his jovial establishments and dependants; of the licensed traders, missionaries, *voyageurs*, and *coureurs des bois*; or the British Canadian fur merchant; of the rise of the great company of the "Northwest," its constitution and internal trade, its parliamentary hall and banqueting room, its boating, its hunting, its wassailings and other magnificent feudal doings in the wilderness. It was the British Mackinaw Company, we presume (a company established in rivalry of the "Northwest"), the scene of whose main operations first aroused the attention of our Government. Its chief factory was established at Michilimackinac, and sen-

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forth its perogues, by Green Bay, Fox River, and the Wisconsin, to the Mississippi, and thence to all its tributary streams, in this way hoping to monopolize the trade with all the Indian tribes on the southern and western waters of our own territory, as the "North-west" had monopolized it along the waters of the North. Of course we now began to view with a jealous eye, and to make exertions for counteracting, the influence hourly acquired over our own aborigines by these immense combinations of foreigners. In 1796, the United States sent out agents to establish rival trading houses on the frontier, and thus, by supplying the wants of the Indians, to link their interests with ours, and to divert the trade, if possible, into national channels. The enterprise failed, being, we suppose, inefficiently conducted and supported; and the design was never afterward attempted until by the individual means and energy of Mr. Astor.

John Jacob Astor was born in Waldorf, a German village, near Heidelberg, on the banks of the Rhine. While yet a youth, he foresaw that he would arrive at great wealth, and, leaving home, took his way, alone, to London, where he found himself at the close of the American Revolution. An elder brother being in the United States, he followed him there. In January, 1784, he arrived in Hampton Roads, with some little merchandise suited to the American market. On the passage, he had become acquainted with a countryman

of his, a furrier, from whom he derived much information in regard to furs, and the manner of conducting the trade. Subsequently he accompanied this gentleman to New York, and, by his advice, invested the proceeds of his merchandise in peltries. With these he sailed to London, and, having disposed of his adventure advantageously, he returned the same year (1784) to New York, with a view of settling in the United States and prosecuting the business thus commenced. Mr. Astor's beginnings in this way were necessarily small, but his perseverance was indomitable, his integrity unimpeachable, and his economy of the most rigid kind. "To these," says Mr. Irving, "were added an aspiring spirit, that always looked upward; a genius, bold, fertile, and expansive; a sagacity quick to grasp and convert every circumstance to its advantage, and a singular and never wavering confidence of signal success." These opinions are more than re-echoed by the whole crowd of Mr. Astor's numerous acquaintances and friends, and are most strongly insisted upon by those who have the pleasure of knowing him best.

In the United States, the fur trade was not yet sufficiently organized to form a regular line of business. Mr. A. made annual visits to Montreal for the purpose of buying peltries; and, as no direct trade was permitted from Canada to any country but England, he shipped them, when bought, immediately to London.

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This difficulty being removed, however, by the treaty of 1795, he made a contract for furs with the Northwest Company, and imported them from Montreal into the United States, thence shipping a portion to different parts of Europe, as well as to the principal market in China.

By the treaty just spoken of, the British possessions on our side of the Lakes were given up, and an opening made for the American fur trader on the confines of Canada, and within the territories of the United States. Here Mr. Astor, about the year 1807, adventured largely on his own account, his increased capital now placing him among the chief of American merchants. The influence of the Mackinaw Company, however, proved too much for him, and he was induced to consider the means of entering into successful competition. He was aware of the wish of the Government to concentrate the fur trade within its boundaries in the hands of its own citizens; and he now offered, if national aid or protection should be afforded, "to turn the whole of the trade into American channels." He was invited to unfold his plans, and they were warmly approved, but, we believe, little more. The countenance of the Government, was, nevertheless, of much importance, and in 1809, he procured from the Legislature of New York a charter, incorporating a company under the name of the "American Fur Company," with a capital of one million of dollars,

and the privilege of increasing it to two. He himself constituted the company, and furnished the capital. The board of directors was merely nominal, and the whole business was conducted with his own resources and according to his own will.

We here pass over Mr. Irving's lucid although brief account of the fur trade in the Pacific, of Russian and American enterprise on the Northwestern coast, and of the discovery by Captain Gray, in 1792, of the mouth of the river Columbia. He proceeds to speak of Captain Jonathan Carver, of the British provincial army. In 1763, shortly after the acquisition of the Canadas by Great Britain, this gentleman projected a journey across the continent, between the forty-third and forty-sixth degrees of northern latitude, to the shores of the Pacific. His objects were "to ascertain the breadth of the continent at its broadest part, and to determine on some place on the shores of the Pacific, where Government might establish a post to facilitate the discovery of a Northwest passage, or a communication between Hudson's Bay and the Pacific Ocean." He failed twice in individual attempts to accomplish this journey. In 1774, Richard Whitworth, a member of Parliament, came into this scheme of Captain Carver's. These two gentlemen determined to take with them fifty or sixty men, artificers and mariners, to proceed up one of the branches of the Missouri, find the source of the Oregon (the Columbia), and sail down the river.

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to its mouth. Here, a fort was to be erected, and the vessels built necessary to carry into execution their purposed discoveries by sea. The British Government sanctioned the plan, and everything was ready for the undertaking, when the American Revolution prevented it.

The expedition of Sir Alexander Mackenzie is well known. In 1793, he crossed the continent, and reached the Pacific Ocean in latitude $52^{\circ} 20' 48''$. In latitude $52^{\circ} 30'$, he partially descended a river flowing to the south, and which he erroneously supposed to be the Columbia. Some years afterwards, he published an account of his journey, and suggested the policy of opening an intercourse between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and forming regular establishments "through the interior and at both extremes, as well as along the coasts and islands." Thus, he thought the entire command of the fur trade of North America might be obtained from latitude 48° north to the pole, excepting that portion held by the Russians. As to the "American adventurers" along the coast, he spoke of them as entitled to but little consideration. "They would instantly disappear," he said, "before a well-regulated trade." Owing to the jealousy existing between the Hudson's Bay and Northwest Company, this idea of Sir Alexander Mackenzie's was never carried into execution.

The successful attempt of Messieurs Lewis and

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Clarke was accomplished, it will be remembered, in 1804. Their course was that proposed by Captain Carver in 1774. They passed up the Missouri to its head waters, crossed the Rocky Mountains, discovered the source of the Columbia, and followed that river down to its mouth. Here they spent the winter, and retraced their steps in the spring. Their reports declared it practicable to establish a line of communication across the continent, and first inspired Mr. Astor with the design of "grasping with his individual hands this great enterprise, which, for years, had been dubiously yet desirously contemplated by powerful associations and maternal governments."

His scheme was gradually matured. Its main features were as follows: A line of trading-posts was to be established along the Missouri and Columbia, to the mouth of the latter, where was to be founded the chief mart. On all the tributary streams throughout this immense route were to be situated inferior posts trading directly with the Indians for their peltries. All these posts would draw upon the mart at the Columbia for their supplies of goods, and would send thither the furs collected. At this latter place, also, were to be built and fitted out coasting vessels, for the purpose of trading along the Northwest coast, returning with the proceeds of their voyages to the same general rendezvous. In this manner, the whole Indian trade, both of the coast and interior, would converge

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to one point. To this point, in continuation of his plan, Mr. Astor proposed to dispatch, every year, a ship with the necessary supplies. She would receive the peltries collected, carry them to Canton, there invest the proceeds in merchandise, and return to New York.

Another point was also to be attended to. In coasting to the Northwest the ship would be brought into contact with the Russian Fur Company's establishment in that quarter; and, as a rivalry might ensue, it was politic to conciliate the good-will of that body. It depended chiefly, for its supplies, upon transient trading vessels from the United States. The owners of these vessels, having nothing beyond their individual interests to consult, made no scruple of furnishing the natives with firearms, and were thus productive of much injury. To this effect the Russian Government had remonstrated with the United States, urging to have the traffic in arms prohibited; but, no municipal law being infringed, our Government could not interfere. Still, it was anxious not to offend Russia, and applied to Mr. Astor for information as to means of remedying the evil, knowing him to be well versed in all the concerns of the trade in question. This application suggested to him the idea of paying a regular visit to the Russian settlements with his annual ship. Thus, being kept regularly in supplies, they would be independent of the casual traders, who would, consequently,

be excluded from the coast. This whole scheme Mr. Astor communicated to President Jefferson, soliciting the countenance of Government. The Cabinet "joined in warm approbation of the plan, and held out assurance of every protection that could, consistently with general policy, be afforded."

In speaking of the motives which actuated Mr. Astor in an enterprise so extensive, Mr. Irving, we are willing to believe, has done that high-minded gentleman no more than the simplest species of justice. "He was already," says our author, "wealthy beyond the ordinary desires of man, but he now aspired to that honorable fame which is awarded to men of similar scope of mind, who, by their great commercial enterprise, have enriched nations, peopled wildernesses, and extended the bounds of empire. He considered his projected establishment at the mouth of the Columbia as the emporium to an immense commerce; as a colony that would form the germ of a wide civilization; that would, in fact, carry the American population across the Rocky Mountains, and spread it along the shores of the Pacific, as it already animated the shores of the Atlantic."

A few words in relation to the Northwest Company. This body, following out in part the suggestion of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, had already established a few trading posts on the coast of the Pacific, in a region lying about two degrees north of the Columbia, thus

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throwing itself between the Russian and American territories. They would contend with Mr. Astor at an immense disadvantage, of course. They had no good post for the receipt of supplies by sea, and must get them with great risk, trouble, and expense overland. Their peltries, also, would have to be taken home the same way, for they were not at liberty to interfere with the East India Company's monopoly by shipping them directly to China. Mr. Astor would therefore greatly undersell them in that, the principal market. Still, as any competition would prove detrimental to both parties, Mr. A. made known his plans to the Northwest Company, proposing to interest them one third in his undertaking. The British Company, however, had several reasons for declining the proposition, not the least forcible of which, we presume, was their secret intention to push on a party forthwith, and forestall their rival in establishing a settlement at the mouth of the Columbia.

In the meantime Mr. Astor did not remain idle. His first care was to procure proper coadjutors, and he was induced to seek them principally from among such clerks of the Northwest Company as were dissatisfied with their situation in that body, having served out their probationary term and being still, through want of influence, without a prospect of speedy promotion. From among these (generally men of capacity and experience in their particular business), Mr. A. obtained

the services of Mr. Alexander M'Kay (who had accompanied Sir Alexander Mackenzie in both of his expeditions), Mr. Donald M'Kenzie, and Mr. Duncan M'Dougal. Mr. Wilson Price Hunt, a native citizen of New Jersey, and a gentleman of great worth, was afterward selected by Mr. Astor as his chief agent, and as the representative of himself at the contemplated establishment. In June, 1810, "articles of agreement" were entered into between Mr. Astor and these four gentlemen, acting for themselves and for the several persons who had already agreed to become, or should thereafter become, associated under the firm of "The Pacific Fur Company." This agreement stipulated that Mr. A. was to be the head of the company, to manage its affairs at New York, and to furnish everything requisite for the enterprise at first cost and charges, provided an advance of more than four hundred thousand dollars should not at any time be involved. The stock was to consist of a hundred shares, Mr. Astor taking fifty, the rest being divided among the other partners and their associates. A general meeting was to be held annually at Columbia River, where absent members might vote by proxy. The association was to continue twenty years, but might be dissolved within the first five years if found unprofitable. For these five years Mr. A. agreed to bear all the loss that might be incurred. An agent, appointed for a like term, was to reside at the main

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establishment, and Mr. Hunt was the person first selected.

Mr. Astor determined to begin his enterprise with two expeditions,—one by sea, the other by land. The former was to carry out everything necessary for the establishment of a fortified post at the mouth of the Columbia. The latter, under the conduct of Mr. Hunt, was to proceed up the Missouri and across the Rocky Mountains to the same point. In the course of this overland journey, the most practicable line of communication would be explored, and the best situations noted for the location of trading rendezvous. Following Mr. Irving in our brief summary of his narrative, we will now give some account of the first of these expeditions.

A ship was provided called the *Tonquin*, of two hundred and ninety tons, with ten guns and twenty men. Lieutenant Jonathan Thorn, of the United States Navy, being on leave of absence, received the command. He was a man of courage, and had distinguished himself in the Tripolitan war. Four of the partners went in the ship,—M'Kay and M'Dougal, of whom we have already spoken, and Messieurs David and Robert Stuart, new associates in the firm. M'Dougal was empowered to act as the proxy of Mr. Astor in the absence of Mr. Hunt. Twelve clerks were also of the party. These were bound to the service of the company for five years, and were to receive one hundred

dollars a year, payable at the expiration of the term, with an annual equipment of clothing to the amount of forty dollars. By promises of future promotion, their interests were identified with those of Mr. Astor. Thirteen Canadian *voyageurs* and several artisans completed the ship's company. On the 8th of September, 1810, the *Tonquin* put to sea. Of her voyage to the mouth of the Columbia, Mr. Irving has given a somewhat ludicrous account. Thorn, the stern, straightforward officer of the navy, having few ideas beyond those of duty and discipline, and looking with supreme contempt upon the motley "lubbers" who formed the greater part of his company, is painted with the easy yet spirited pencil of an artist indeed; while M'Dougal, the shrewd Scotch partner, bustling yet pompous, and impressed with lofty notions of his own importance as proxy for Mr. Astor, is made as supremely ridiculous as possible, with as little apparent effort as can well be imagined; the portraits, however, carry upon their faces the evidence of their authenticity. The voyage is prosecuted amid a series of petty quarrels and cross purposes between the captain and his crew, and, occasionally, between Mr. M'Kay and Mr. M'Dougal. The contests between the two latter gentlemen were brief, it appears, though violent. "Within fifteen minutes," says Captain Thorn in a letter to Mr. Astor, "they would be caressing each other like children." The *Tonquin* doubled Cape Horn

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on Christmas Day, arrived at Owhyhee on the 11th of February, took on board fresh provisions, sailed again with twelve Sandwich Islanders on the 28th, and on the 22d of March arrived at the mouth of the Columbia. In seeking a passage across the bar, a boat and nine men were lost among the breakers. On the way from Owhyhee a violent storm occurred; and the bickerings still continued between the partners and captain, the latter, indeed, grievously suspecting the former of a design to depose him.

The Columbia, for about forty miles from its mouth, is, strictly speaking, an estuary, varying in breadth from three to seven miles, and indented by deep bays. Shoals and other obstructions render the navigation dangerous. Leaving this broad portion of the stream in the progress upward, we find the mouth of the river proper, which is about half a mile wide. The entrance to the estuary from sea is bounded on the south by a long, low, and sandy beach stretching into the ocean, and called Point Adams. On the northern side of the frith is Cape Disappointment, a steep promontory. Immediately east of this cape is Baker's Bay, and within this the *Tonquin* came to anchor.

Jealousies still continued between the captain and the worthy M'Dougal, who could come to no agreement in regard to the proper location for the contemplated establishment. On April the fifth, without troubling himself further with the opinions of his coadjutors,

Mr. Thorn landed in Baker's Bay and began operations. At this summary proceeding, the partners were, of course, in high dudgeon, and an open quarrel seemed likely to ensue, to the serious detriment of the enterprise. These difficulties, however, were at length arranged, and finally, on the 12th of April, a settlement was commenced at a point of land called Point George, on the southern shore of the frith. Here was a good harbor, where vessels of two hundred tons might anchor within fifty yards of the shore. In honor of the chief partner, the new post received the title of Astoria. After much delay, the portion of the cargo destined for the post was landed, and the *Tonquin* left free to proceed on her voyage. She was to coast to the north, to trade for peltries at the different harbors, and to touch at Astoria on her return in the autumn. Mr. M'Kay went in her as supercargo, and a Mr. Lewis as ship's clerk. On the morning of the 5th of June she stood out to sea, the whole number of persons on board amounting to three and twenty. In one of the outer bays Captain Thorn procured the services of an Indian named Lamazee, who had already made two voyages along the coast, and who agreed to accompany him as interpreter. In a few days the ship arrived at Vancouver's Island and came to anchor in the harbor of Neweetee, much against the advice of the Indian, who warned Captain Thorn of the perfidious character of the natives. The result was the merciless

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butchery of the whole crew, with the exception of the interpreter and Mr. Lewis, the ship's clerk. The latter, finding himself mortally wounded and without companions, blew up the ship and perished with more than a hundred of the enemy. Lamazee, getting among the Indians, escaped, and was the means of bearing the news of the disaster to Astoria. In relating at length the thrilling details of this catastrophe, Mr. Irving takes occasion to comment on the headstrong, though brave and strictly honorable, character of Lieutenant Thorn. The danger and folly, on the part of agents, in disobeying the matured instructions of those who deliberately plan extensive enterprises, such as that of Mr. Astor, is also justly and forcibly shown. The misfortune here spoken of arose altogether from a disregard of Mr. A.'s often-repeated advice—to admit but few Indians on board the *Tonquín* at one time. Her loss was a serious blow to the infant establishment at Astoria. To this post let us now return.

The natives inhabiting the borders of the estuary were divided into four tribes, of which the Chinooks were the principal. Comcomly, a one-eyed Indian, was their chief. These tribes resembled each other in nearly every respect, and were, no doubt, of a common stock. They lived chiefly by fishing—the Columbia and its tributary streams abounding in fine salmon and a variety of other fish. A trade in peltries, but to no great amount, was immediately commenced and

carried on. Much disquiet was occasioned at the post by a rumor among the Indians that thirty white men had appeared on the banks of the Columbia and were building houses at the second rapids. It was feared that these were an advance party of the Northwest Company endeavoring to seize upon the upper parts of the river, and thus forestall Mr. Astor in the trade of the surrounding country. Bloody feuds in this case might be anticipated, such as had prevailed between rival companies in former times. The intelligence of the Indians proved true,—the "Northwest" had erected a trading-house on the Spokane River, which falls into the north branch of the Columbia. The Astorians could do little to oppose them in their present reduced state as to numbers. It was resolved, however, to advance a countercheck to the post on the Spokane, and Mr. David Stuart prepared to set out for this purpose with eight men and a small assortment of goods. On the fifteenth of July, when this expedition was about starting, a canoe, manned with nine white men, and bearing the British flag, entered the harbor. They proved to be the party dispatched by the rival company to anticipate Mr. Astor in the settlement at the mouth of the river. Mr. David Thompson, their leader, announced himself as a partner of the "Northwest," but otherwise gave a very peaceable account of himself. It appears, however, from information subsequently derived from other sources, that he had

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hurried with a desperate haste across the mountains, calling at all the Indian villages in his march, presenting them with British flags, and "proclaiming formally that he took possession of the country for the Northwest Company, and in the name of the king of Great Britain." His plan was defeated, it seems, by the desertion of a great portion of his followers, and it was thought probable that he now merely descended the river with a view of reconnoitring. M'Dougal treated the gentlemen with great kindness and supplied them with goods and provisions for their journey back across the mountains,—this much against the wishes of Mr. David Stuart, "who did not think the object of their visit entitled them to any favor." A letter for Mr. Astor was entrusted to Thompson.

On the twenty-third of July, the party for the region of the Spokane set out, and, after a voyage of much interest, succeeded in establishing the first interior trading-post of the company. It was situated on a point of land about three miles long and two broad, formed by the junction of the Okanagan with the Columbia. In the meantime the Indians near Astoria began to evince a hostile disposition, and a reason for this altered demeanor was soon after found in the report of the loss of the *Tonquin*. Early in August the settlers received intelligence of her fate. They now found themselves in a perilous situation,—a mere handful of men on a savage coast, and surrounded by barbarous enemies.

From their dilemma they were relieved, for the present, by the ingenuity of M'Dougal. The natives had a great dread of the smallpox, which had appeared among them a few years before, sweeping off entire tribes. They believed it an evil either inflicted upon them by the Great Spirit, or brought among them by the white men. Seizing upon this latter idea, M'Dougal assembled several of the chieftains whom he believed to be inimical, and informing them that he had heard of the treachery of their northern brethren in regard to the *Tonquin*, produced from his pocket a small bottle. "The white men among you," said he, "are few in number, it is true, but they are mighty in medicine. See here! In this bottle I hold the smallpox safely corked up; I have but to draw the cork and let loose the pestilence to sweep man, woman, and child from the face of the earth!" The chiefs were dismayed. They represented to the "Great Smallpox Chief" that they were the firmest friends of the white men, that they had nothing to do with the villains who murdered the crew of the *Tonquin*, and that it would be unjust, in uncorking the bottle, to destroy the innocent with the guilty. M'Dougal was convinced. He promised not to uncork it until some overt act should compel him to do so. In this manner tranquillity was restored to the settlement. A large house was now built, and the frame of a schooner put together. She was named the *Dolly*, and was the first American vessel

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launched on the coast. But our limits will not permit us to follow too minutely the details of the enterprise. The adventurers kept up their spirits, sending out occasional foraging parties in the *Dolly*, and looking forward to the arrival of Mr. Hunt. So wore away the year 1811 at the little post of Astoria. We now come to speak of the expedition by land.

This, it will be remembered, was to be conducted by Mr. Wilson Price Hunt, a native of New Jersey. He is represented as scrupulously upright, of amiable disposition, and agreeable manners. He had never been in the heart of the wilderness, but, having been for some time engaged in commerce at St. Louis, furnishing Indian traders with goods, he had acquired much knowledge of the trade at second hand. Mr. Donald M'Kenzie, another partner, was associated with him. He had been ten years in the interior, in the service of the Northwest Company, and had much practical experience in all Indian concerns. In July, 1810, the two gentlemen repaired to Montreal, where everything requisite to the expedition could be procured. Here they met with many difficulties, some of which were thrown in their way by their rivals. Having succeeded, however, in laying in a supply of ammunition, provisions, and Indian goods, they embarked all on board a large boat, and, with a very inefficient crew, the best to be procured, took their departure from St. Ann's, near the extremity of the island of Montreal. Their

course lay up the Ottawa, and along a range of small lakes and rivers. On the twenty-second of July they arrived at Mackinaw, situated on Mackinaw Island, at the confluence of Lakes Huron and Michigan. Here it was necessary to remain some time to complete the assortment of Indian goods and engage more *voyageurs*. While waiting to accomplish these objects, Mr. Hunt was joined by Mr. Ramsay Crooks, a gentleman whom he had invited, by letter, to engage as a partner in the expedition. He was a native of Scotland, had served under the Northwest Company, and been engaged in private trading adventures among the various tribes of the Missouri. Mr. Crooks represented, in forcible terms, the dangers to be apprehended from the Indians, especially the Blackfeet and Sioux, and it was agreed to increase the number of the party to sixty upon arriving at St. Louis. Thirty was its strength upon leaving Mackinaw. This occurred on the twelfth of August. The expedition pursued the usual route of the fur trader,—by Green Bay, Fox and Wisconsin rivers, to Prairie du Chien, and thence down the Mississippi to St. Louis, where they landed on the third of September. Here Mr. Hunt met with some opposition from an association called the Missouri Fur Company, and especially from its leading partner, a Mr. Manuel Lisa. This company had a capital of about forty thousand dollars, and employed about two hundred and fifty men. Its object was

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to establish posts along the upper part of the river and monopolize the trade. Mr. H. proceeded to strengthen himself against competition. He secured to Mr. Astor the services of Mr. Joseph Miller. This gentleman had been an officer of the United States Army, but had resigned on being refused a furlough, and taken to trading with the Indians. He joined the association as a partner; and, on account of his experience and general acquirements, Mr. Hunt considered him a valuable coadjutor. Several boatmen and hunters were also now enlisted, but not until after a delay of several weeks. This delay, and the previous difficulties at Montreal and Mackinaw, had thrown Mr. H. much behind his original calculations, so that he found it would be impossible to effect his voyage up the Missouri during the present season. There was every likelihood that the river would be closed before the party could reach its upper waters. To winter, however, at St. Louis, would be expensive. Mr. H., therefore determined to push up on his way as far as possible, to some point where game might be found in abundance, and there take up his quarters until spring. On the twenty-first of October he set out. The party were distributed in three boats,—two large Schenectady barges and a keel boat. By the sixteenth of November they reached the mouth of the Nodowa, a distance of four hundred and fifty miles, where they set up their winter quarters. Here, Mr. Robert M'Lellan, at

the invitation of Mr. Hunt, joined the association as a partner. He was a man of vigorous frame, of restless and imperious temper, and had distinguished himself as a partisan under General Wayne. John Day also joined the company at this place,—a tall and athletic hunter from the backwoods of Virginia. Leaving the main body at Nodowa, Mr. Hunt now returned to St. Louis for a reinforcement. He was again impeded by the machinations of the Missouri Fur Company, but finally succeeded in enlisting one hunter, some *voyageurs*, and a Sioux interpreter, Pierre Dorion. With these, after much difficulty, he got back to the encampment on the seventeenth of April. Soon after this period the voyage up the river was resumed. The party now consisted of nearly sixty persons: five partners, Hunt, Crooks, M'Kenzie, Miller, and M'Lellan; one clerk, John Reed; forty Canadian *voyageurs* and several hunters. They embarked in four boats, one of which, of a large size, mounted a swivel and two howitzers.

We do not intend, of course to proceed with our travellers throughout the vast series of adventure encountered in their passage through the wilderness. To the curious in these particulars, we recommend the book itself. No details more intensely exciting are to be found in any work of travels within our knowledge. At times full of life and enjoying the whole luxury to be found in the career of the hunter, at times suffer-

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ing every extremity of fatigue, hunger, thirst, anxiety, terror, and despair, Mr. Hunt still persisted in his journey, and finally brought it to a successful termination. A bare outline of the route pursued is all we can attempt.

Proceeding up the river, our party arrived, on the twenty-eighth of April, at the mouth of the Nebraska, or Platte, the largest tributary of the Missouri, and about six hundred miles above its junction with the Mississippi. They now halted for two days to supply themselves with oars and poles from the tough wood of the ash, which is not to be found higher up the river. Upon the second of May, two of the hunters insisted upon abandoning the expedition and returning to St. Louis. On the tenth, the party reached the Omaha village and encamped in its vicinity. This village is about eight hundred and thirty miles above St. Louis, and on the west bank of the stream. Three men here deserted, but their places were luckily supplied by three others, who were prevailed upon, by liberal promises, to enlist. On the fifteenth, Mr. Hunt left Omaha and proceeded. Not long afterward, a canoe was descried navigated by two white men. They proved to be two adventurers, who, for some years past, had been hunting and trapping near the head of the Missouri. Their names were Jones and Carson. They were now on their way to St. Louis, but readily abandoned their voyage and turned their faces again toward the Rocky

Mountains. On the twenty-third, Mr. Hunt received, by a special messenger, a letter from Mr. Manuel Lisa, the leading partner of the Missouri Fur Company and the gentleman who rendered him so many dis-services at St. Louis. He had left that place, with a large party, three weeks after Mr. H., and, having heard rumors of hostile intentions on the part of the Sioux, a much dreaded tribe of Indians, made great exertions to overtake him, that they might pass through the dangerous part of the river together. Mr. H., however, was justly suspicious of the Spaniard, and pushed on. At the village of the Poncas, about a league south of the river Quicourt, he stopped only long enough to procure a supply of dried buffalo meat. On the morning of the twenty-fifth, it was discovered that Jones and Carson had deserted. They were pursued, but in vain. The next day, three white men were observed, in two canoes, descending the river. They proved to be three Kentucky hunters,—Edward Robinson, John Hoback, and Jacob Rizner. They also had passed several years in the upper wilderness, and were now on their way home, but willingly turned back with the expedition. Information derived from these recruits induced Mr. Hunt to alter his route. Hitherto he had intended to follow the course pursued by Messieurs Lewis and Clarke, ascending the Missouri to its forks and thence by land across the mountains. He was informed, however, that, in so doing, he would have to

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pass through the country of the Blackfeet, a savage tribe of Indians, exasperated against the whites on account of the death of one of their men by the hands of Captain Lewis. Robinson advised a more southerly route. This would carry them over the mountains about where the head waters of the Platte and the Yellowstone take their rise, a much more practicable pass than that of Lewis and Clarke. To this counsel Mr. Hunt agreed, and resolved to leave the Missouri at the village of the Arickaras, at which they would arrive in a few days. On the first of June, they reached "the great bend" of the river, which here winds for about thirty miles round a circular peninsula, the neck of which is not above two thousand yards across. On the morning of June the third, the party were overtaken by Lisa, much to their dissatisfaction. The meeting was, of course, far from cordial, but an outward appearance of civility was maintained for two days. On the third a quarrel took place, which was near terminating seriously. It was, however, partially adjusted, and the rival parties coasted along opposite sides of the river in sight of each other. On the twelfth of June, they reached the village of the Arickaras, between the forty-sixth and forty-seventh parallels of north latitude, and about fourteen hundred and thirty miles above the mouth of the Missouri. In accomplishing thus much of his journey, Mr. Hunt had not failed to meet with a crowd of difficulties at which

we have not even hinted. He was frequently in extreme peril from large bodies of the Sioux, and at one time it was a mere accident alone which prevented the massacre of the whole party.

At the Arickara village our adventurers were to abandon their boats and proceed westward across the wilderness. Horses were to be purchased from the Indians, who could not, however furnish them in sufficient numbers. In this dilemma, Lisa offered to purchase the boats, now no longer of use, and to pay for them in horses, to be obtained at a fort belonging to the Missouri Fur Company and situated at the Mandan villages, about a hundred and fifty miles farther up the river. A bargain was made, and Messieurs Lisa and Crooks went for the horses, returning with them in about a fortnight. At the Arickara village, if we understand, Mr. Hunt engaged the services of one Edward Rose. He enlisted as interpreter, when the expedition should reach the country of the Upsarokas or Crow Indians, among whom he had formerly resided. On the eighteenth of July, the party took up their line of march. They were still insufficiently provided with horses. The cavalcade consisted of eighty-two, most of them heavily laden with Indian goods, beaver traps, ammunition, and provisions. Each of the partners was mounted. As they took leave of Arickara, the veterans of Lisa's company, as well as Lisa himself, predicted the total destruction of our

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adventurers amid the innumerable perils of the wilderness.

To avoid the Blackfeet Indians, a ferocious and implacable tribe of which we have before spoken, the party kept a southwestern direction. This route took them across some of the tributary streams of the Missouri and through immense prairies, bounded only by the horizon. Their progress was at first slow, and, Mr. Crooks falling sick, it was necessary to make a litter for him between two horses. On the twenty-third of the month they encamped on the banks of a little stream, nicknamed Big River, where they remained several days, meeting with a variety of adventures. Among other things, they were enabled to complete their supply of horses from a band of the Cheyenne Indians. On the sixth of August, the journey was resumed, and they soon left the hostile region of the Sioux behind them. About this period a plot was discovered on the part of the interpreter, Edward Rose. This villain had been tampering with the men, and proposed, upon arriving among his old acquaintances the Crows, to desert to the savages with as much booty as could be carried off. The matter was adjusted, however, and Mr. Rose, through the ingenuity of Mr. Hunt, quietly dismissed. On the thirteenth, Mr. H. varied his course to the westward, a route which soon brought him to a fork of the Little Missouri, and upon the skirts of the Black Mountains. These are an

extensive chain, lying about a hundred miles east of the Rocky Mountains, stretching northeasterly from the south fork of the river Platte to the great north bend of the Missouri, and dividing the waters of the Missouri from those of the Mississippi and Arkansas. The travellers here supposed themselves to be about two hundred and fifty miles from the village of the Arickaras. Their more serious troubles now commenced. Hunger and thirst, with the minor difficulties of grizzly bears, beset them at every turn, as they attempted to force a passage through the rugged barriers in their path. At length they emerged upon a stream of clear water, one of the forks of the Powder River, and once more beheld wide meadows and plenty of buffalo. They ascended this stream about eighteen miles, directing their march toward a lofty mountain which had been in sight since the seventeenth. They reached the base of this mountain, which proved to be a spur of the Rocky chain, on the thirtieth, having now come about four hundred miles since leaving Arickara.

For one or two days they endeavored in vain to find a defile in the mountains. On the third of September, they made an attempt to force a passage to the westward, but soon became entangled among rocks and precipices, which set all their efforts at defiance. They were now, too, in the region of the terrible Upsarokas, and encountered them at every step. They met also with friendly bands of Shoshonies and Flatheads. After

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a thousand troubles they made some way upon their journey. On the ninth, they reached Wind River, a stream which gives its name to a range of mountains consisting of three parallel chains, eighty miles long and about twenty-five broad. "One of its peaks," says our author, "is probably fifteen thousand feet above the level of the sea." For five days Mr. Hunt followed up the course of the Wind River, crossing and recrossing it. He had been assured by the three hunters who advised him to strike through the wilderness, that by going up the river and crossing a single mountain ridge, he would come upon the head waters of the Columbia. The scarcity of game, however, determined him to pursue a different course. In the course of the day, after coming to this resolve, they perceived three mountain peaks, white with snow, and which were recognized by the hunters as rising just above a fork of the Columbia. These peaks were named the Pilot Knobs by Mr. Hunt. The travellers continued their course for about forty miles to the southwest, and at length found a river flowing to the west. This proved to be a branch of the Colorado. They followed its current for fifteen miles. On the eighteenth, abandoning its main course, they took a northwesterly direction for eight miles, and reached one of its little tributaries, issuing from the bosom of the mountains and running through green meadows abounding in buffalo. Here they encamped for several days, a little

repose being necessary for both men and horses. On the twenty-fourth, the journey was resumed. Fifteen miles brought them to a stream about fifty feet wide, which was recognized as one of the head waters of the Columbia. They kept along it for two days, during which it gradually swelled into a river of some size. At length it was joined by another current, and both united swept off in an unimpeded stream, which, from its rapidity and turbulence, had received the appellation of Mad River. Down this they anticipated an uninterrupted voyage, in canoes, to the point of their ultimate destination, but their hopes were very far from being realized.

The partners held a consultation. The three hunters who had hitherto acted as guides knew nothing of the region to the west of the Rocky Mountains. It was doubtful whether Mad River could be navigated, and they could hardly resolve to abandon their horses upon an uncertainty. The vote, nevertheless, was for embarkation, and they proceeded to build the necessary vessels. In the meantime, Mr. Hunt, having now reached the head waters of the Columbia, reputed to abound in beaver, turned his thoughts to the main object of the expedition. Four men, Alexander Carson, Louis St. Michel, Pierre Detayé, and Pierre Delaunay, were detached from the expedition to remain and trap beaver by themselves in the wilderness. Having collected a sufficient quantity of peltries, they were

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to bring them to the depot, at the mouth of the Columbia, or to some intermediate post to be established by the company. These trappers had just departed when two Snake Indians wandered into the camp, and declared the river to be unnavigable. Scouts sent out by Mr. Hunt finally confirmed this report. On the fourth of October, therefore, the encampment was broken up, and the party proceeded to search for a post in possession of the Missouri Fur Company, and said to be somewhere in the neighborhood, upon the banks of another branch of the Columbia. This post, they found without much difficulty. It was deserted, and our travellers gladly took possession of the rude buildings. The stream here found was upward of a hundred yards wide. Canoes were constructed with all despatch. In the meantime another detachment of trappers was cast loose in the wilderness. These were Robinson, Rizner, Hoback, Carr, and Mr. Joseph Miller. This latter, it will be remembered, was one of the partners; he threw up his share in the expedition, however, for a life of more perilous adventure. On the eighteenth of the month (October), fifteen canoes being completed, the voyagers embarked, leaving their horses in charge of the two Snake Indians, who were still in company.

In the course of the day the party arrived at the junction of the stream upon which they floated with Mad River. Here Snake River commences, the scene

of a thousand disasters. After proceeding about four hundred miles, by means of frequent portages, and beset with innumerable difficulties of every kind, the adventurers were brought to a halt by a series of frightful cataracts, raging, as far as the eye could reach, between stupendous ramparts of black rock, rising more than two hundred feet perpendicularly. This place they called "The Caldron Linn." Here, Antoine Clappine, one of the *voyageurs*, perished amid the whirlpools, three of the canoes stuck immovably among the rocks, and one was swept away with all the weapons and effects of four of the boatmen.

The situation of the party was now lamentable, indeed,—in the heart of an unknown wilderness, at a loss what route to take, ignorant of their distance from the place of their destination, and with no human being near them from whom counsel might be taken. Their stock of provisions was reduced to five days' allowance, and famine stared them in the face. It was therefore more perilous to keep together than to separate. The goods and provisions, except a small supply for each man, were concealed in *caches* (holes dug in the earth), and the party were divided into several small detachments, which started off in different directions, keeping the mouth of the Columbia in view as their ultimate point of destination. From this post they were still distant nearly a thousand miles, although this fact was unknown to them at the time.

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On the twenty-first of January, after a series of almost incredible adventures, the division in which Mr. Hunt enrolled himself struck the waters of the Columbia, some distance below the junction of its two great branches, Lewis and Clarke rivers, and not far from the influx of the Wallah-Wallah. Since leaving the Caldron Linn they had toiled two hundred and forty miles, through snowy wastes and precipitous mountains, and six months had now elapsed since their departure from the Arickara village on the Missouri, their whole route from that point, according to their computation, having been seventeen hundred and fifty-one miles. Some vague intelligence was now received in regard to the other division of the party, and also of the settlers at the mouth of the Columbia. On the thirty-first, Mr. Hunt reached the falls of the river, and encamped at the village of Wish-Ram. Here were heard tidings of the massacre on board the *Tonquin*. On the fifth of February, having procured canoes with much difficulty, the adventurers departed from Wish-Ram, and, on the fifteenth, sweeping round an intervening cape, they came in sight of the long-desired Astoria. Among the first to greet them on their landing were some of their old comrades, who had parted from them at the Caldron Linn and who had reached the settlement nearly a month before. Mr. Crooks and John Day, being unable to get on, had been left with some Indians in the wilderness; they afterward came

in. Carriere, a *voyageur*, who was also abandoned through the sternest necessity, was never heard of more. Jean Baptiste Prevost, likewise a *voyageur*, rendered frantic by famine, had been drowned in the Snake River. All parties had suffered the extremes of weariness, privation, and peril. They had travelled from St. Louis, thirty-five hundred miles. Let us now return to Mr. Astor.

As yet he had received no intelligence from the Columbia, and had to proceed upon the supposition that all had gone as he desired. He accordingly fitted out a fine ship, the *Beaver*, of four hundred and ninety tons. Her cargo was assorted with a view to the supply of Astoria, the trade along the coast, and the wants of the Russian Fur Company. There embarked in her for the settlement, a partner, five clerks, fifteen American laborers, and six Canadian *voyageurs*. Mr. John Clarke, the partner, was a native of the United States, although he had passed much of his life in the Northwest, having been employed in the fur trade since the age of sixteen. The clerks were chiefly young American gentlemen of good connections. Mr. Astor had selected this reinforcement with the design of securing an ascendancy of American influence at Astoria, and rendering the association decidedly national. This, from the peculiar circumstances of the case, he had been unable to do in the commencement of his undertaking.

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Captain Sowle, the commander of the *Beaver*, was directed to touch at the Sandwich Islands to inquire about the fortunes of the *Tonquin*, and ascertain, if possible, whether the settlement had been effected at Astoria. If so, he was to enlist as many of the natives as possible and proceed. He was to use great caution in his approach to the mouth of the Columbia. If everything was found right, however, he was to land such part of his cargo as was intended for the post, and to sail for New Archangel with the Russian supplies. Having received furs in payment, he would return to Astoria, take in the peltries there collected, and make the best of his way to Canton. These were the strict letter of his instructions, a deviation from which was subsequently the cause of great embarrassment and loss, and contributed largely to the failure of the whole enterprise. The *Beaver* sailed on the tenth of October, 1811, and, after taking in twelve natives at the Sandwich Islands, reached the mouth of the Columbia in safety on the ninth of May, 1812. Her arrival gave life and vigor to the establishment, and afforded means of extending the operations of the company and founding a number of interior trading-posts.

It now became necessary to send despatches overland to Mr. Astor at New York, an attempt at so doing having been frustrated some time before by the hostility of the Indians at Wish-Ram. The task was confided to Mr. Robert Stuart, who, though he had never

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been across the mountains, had given evidence of his competency for such undertakings. He was accompanied by Ben. Jones and John Day, Kentuckians; Andri Vallar and Francis Le Clerc, Canadians; and two of the partners, Messieurs M'Lellan and Crooks, who were desirous of returning to the Atlantic States. This little party set out on the twenty-ninth of June, and Mr. Irving accompanies them, in detail, throughout the whole of their long and dangerous wayfaring. As might be expected, they encountered misfortunes still more terrible than those before experienced by Mr. Hunt and his associates. The chief features of the journey were the illness of Mr. Crooks and the loss of all the horses of the party through the villainy of the Upsarokas. This latter circumstance was the cause of excessive trouble and great delay. On the thirtieth of April, however, the party arrived, in fine health and spirits, at St. Louis, having been ten months in performing their perilous expedition. The route taken by Mr. Stuart coincided nearly with that of Mr. Hunt, as far as the Wind River Mountains. From this point the former struck somewhat to the southeast, following the Nebraska to its junction with the Missouri.

War having at length broken out between the United States and England, Mr. Astor perceived that the harbor of New York would be blockaded, and the departure of the annual supply ship in the autumn prevented. In this emergency he wrote to Captain Sowle, the com-

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mander of the *Beaver*, addressing him at Canton. The letter directed him to proceed to the factory at the mouth of the Columbia, with such articles as the establishment might need, and to remain there subject to the orders of Mr. Hunt. In the meantime nothing had yet been heard from the settlement. Still, not discouraged, Mr. A. determined to send out another ship, although the risk of loss was so greatly enhanced that no insurance could be effected. The *Lark* was chosen, remarkable for her fast sailing. She put to sea on the sixth of March, 1813, under the command of Mr. Northrop, her mate, the officer first appointed to command her having shrunk from his engagement. Within a fortnight after her departure, Mr. A. received intelligence that the Northwest Company had presented a memorial to Great Britain, stating the vast scope of the contemplated operations at Astoria, expressing a fear that, unless crushed, the settlement there would effect the downfall of their own fur trade, and advising that a force be sent against the colony. In consequence, the frigate *Phoebe* was ordered to convoy the armed ship *Isaac Todd*, belonging to the Northwest Company, and provided with men and munitions for the formation of a new establishment. They were directed "to proceed together to the mouth of the Columbia, capture or destroy whatever American fortress they should find there, and plant the British flag on its ruins." Upon this matter's being represented to our Government,

the frigate *Adams*, Captain Crane, was detailed for the protection of Astoria; and Mr. A. proceeded to fit out a ship called the *Enterprise*, to sail in company with the frigate, and freighted with additional supplies. Just, however, as the two vessels were ready, a reinforcement of seamen was wanted for Lake Ontario, and the crew of the *Adams* were necessarily transferred to that service Mr. A. was about to send off his ship alone, when a British force made its appearance off the Hook, and New York was effectually blockaded. The *Enterprise*, therefore, was unloaded and dismantled. We now return to the *Beaver*.

This vessel, after leaving at Astoria that portion of her cargo destined for that post, sailed for New Archangel on the fourth of August, 1812. She arrived there on the nineteenth, meeting with no incidents of moment. A long time was now expended in negotiations with the drunken governor of the Russian fur colony,—one Count Baranoff,—and when they were finally completed the month of October had arrived. Moreover, in payment for his supplies, Mr. Hunt was to receive seal-skins, and none were on the spot. It was necessary, therefore, to proceed to a seal-catching establishment belonging to the Russian Company at the Island of St. Paul, in the sea of Kamschatka. He set sail for this place on the fourth of October, after having wasted forty-five days at New Archangel. He arrived on the thirty-first of the month, by which time, accord-

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ing to his arrangement, he should have been back at Astoria. Now occurred great delay in getting the peltries on board; every pack being overhauled to prevent imposition. To make matters worse, the *Beaver* one night was driven off shore in a gale, and could not get back until the thirteenth of November. Having at length taken in the cargo and put to sea, Mr. Hunt was in some perplexity as to his course. The ship had been much injured in the late gale, and he thought it imprudent to attempt making the mouth of the Columbia in this boisterous time of the year. Moreover, the season was already much advanced; and should he proceed to Astoria as originally intended, he might arrive at Canton so late as to find a bad market. Unfortunately, therefore, he determined to go at once to the Sandwich Islands, there await the arrival of the annual ship from New York, take passage in her to the settlement, and let the *Beaver* proceed on her voyage to China. It is but justice to add that he was mainly induced to this course by the timid representations of Captain Sowle. They reached Woahoo in safety, where the ship underwent the necessary repairs, and again put to sea on the first of January, 1813, leaving Mr. Hunt on the island.

At Canton, Captain Sowle found the letter of Mr. Astor, giving him information of the war, and directing him to convey the intelligence to Astoria. He wrote a reply, in which he declined complying with

these orders, saying that he would wait for peace and then return home. In the meantime, Mr. Hunt waited in vain for the annual vessel. At length, about the twentieth of June, the ship *Albatross*, Captain Smith, arrived from China, bringing the first news of the war to the Sandwich Islands. This ship Mr. H. chartered for two thousand dollars, to land him, with some supplies, at Astoria. He reached this post on the twentieth of August, where he found the affairs of the company in a perishing condition, and the partners bent upon abandoning the settlement. To this resolution Mr. Hunt was finally brought to consent. There was a large stock of furs, however, at the factory, which it was necessary to get to a market, and a ship was required for this service. The *Albatross* was bound to the Marquesas, and thence to the Sandwich Islands; and it was resolved that Mr. H. should sail in her in quest of a vessel, returning, if possible, by the first of January, and bringing with him a supply of provisions. He departed on the twenty-sixth of August and reached the Marquesas without accident. Commodore Porter soon afterward arrived, bringing intelligence that the British frigate *Phœbe*, with a store-ship mounted with battering pieces, together with the sloops of war *Cherub* and *Racoon*, had all sailed from Rio Janeiro on the sixth of July, bound for the mouth of the Columbia. Mr. H., after in vain attempting to purchase a whale-ship from Commodore Porter, started on the twenty-third of

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November for the Sandwich Islands, arriving on December the twentieth. Here he found Captain Northrop of the *Lark*, which had suffered shipwreck on the coast about the middle of March. The brig *Pedlar* was now purchased for ten thousand dollars, and, Captain N. being put in command of her, Mr. H. sailed for Astoria on the twenty-second of January, 1814, with the view of removing the property there, as speedily as possible, to the Russian settlements in the vicinity,—these were Mr. Astor's orders sent out by the *Lark*. On the twenty-eighth of February the brig anchored in the Columbia, when it was found that, on the twelfth of December, the British had taken possession of the post. In some negotiations carried on just before the surrender, on the part of the Northwest Company and M'Dougal, that worthy personage gave full evidence that Captain Thorn was not far wrong in suspecting him to be no better than he should be. He had been for some time secretly a partner of the rival association, and shortly before the arrival of the British took advantage of his situation as head of the post to barter away the property of the company at less than one third of its value.

Thus failed this great enterprise of Mr. Astor. At the peace, Astoria itself, by the treaty of Ghent, reverted with the adjacent country to the United States, on the principle of *status ante bellum*. In the winter of 1815, Congress passed a law prohibiting all traffic of British

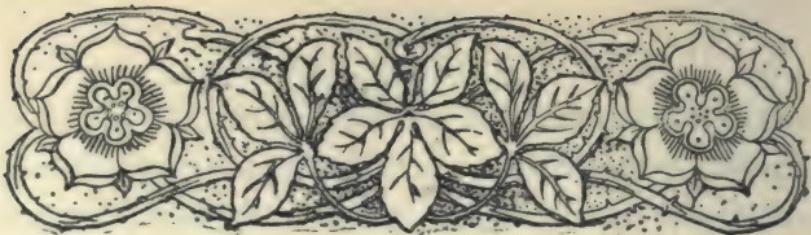
traders within our territories, and Mr. A. felt anxious to seize this opportunity for the renewal of his undertaking. For good reasons, however, he could do nothing without the direct protection of the Government. This evinced much supineness in the matter; the favorable moment was suffered to pass unimproved, and, in spite of the prohibition of Congress, the British finally usurped the lucrative traffic in peltries throughout the whole of our vast territories in the Northwest. A very little aid from the sources whence he had naturally a right to expect it would have enabled Mr. Astor to direct this profitable commerce into national channels, and to render New York, what London has now long been, the great emporium for furs.

We have already spoken of the masterly manner in which Mr. Irving has executed his task. It occurs to us that we have observed one or two slight discrepancies in the narrative. There appears to be some confusion between the names of M'Lellan, M'Lennon, and M'Lennan—or do these three appellations refer to the same individual? In going up the Missouri, Mr. Hunt arrives at the Great Bend on the first of June, the third day after which (the day on which the party is overtaken by Lisa) is said to be the third of *July*. Jones and Carson join the expedition just above the Omaha village. At page 187, vol. I., we are told that the two men "who had joined the company at the Maha village" (meaning Omaha we presume), deserted

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and were pursued, but never overtaken; at page 199, however, Carson is recognized by an Indian who is holding a parley with the party. The *Lark*, too, only sailed from New York on the sixth of March, 1813, and on the tenth we find her, much buffeted, somewhere in the near vicinity of the Sandwich Islands. These errors are of little importance in themselves, but may as well be rectified in a future edition.





Review of Stephens's "Arabia Petræa"¹

MR. STEPHENS has here given us two volumes of more than ordinary interest, written with a freshness of manner and evincing a manliness of feeling, both worthy of high consideration. Although in some respects deficient, the work, too, presents some points of moment to the geographer, to the antiquarian, and more especially, to the theologian. Viewed only as one of a class of writings whose direct tendency is to throw light upon the Book of Books, it has strong claims upon the attention of all who read. While the vast importance of critical and philological research in dissipating the obscurities and determining the exact sense of the Scriptures cannot be too readily conceded, it may be doubted whether the collateral illustration derivable from records of travel be not deserving of at least equal consideration. Cer-

¹ *New York Review*, October, 1837.

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tainly the evidence thus afforded, exerting an enkindling influence upon the popular imagination, and so taking palpable hold upon the popular understanding, will not fail to become in time a most powerful because easily available instrument in the downfall of unbelief. Infidelity itself has often afforded unwilling and unwitting testimony to the truth. It is surprising to find with what unintentional precision both Gibbon and Volney (among others) have used, for the purpose of description, in their accounts of nations and countries, the identical phraseology employed by the inspired writers when foretelling the most improbable events. In this manner scepticism has been made the root of belief, and the providence of the Deity has been no less remarkable in the extent and nature of the means for bringing to light the evidence of his accomplished word, than in working the accomplishment itself.

Of late days, the immense stores of Biblical elucidation derivable from the East have been rapidly accumulating in the hands of the student. When the *Observations* of Harmer were given to the public, he had access to few other works than the travels of Chardin, Pococke, Shaw, Maundrell, Pitts, and D'Arvieux, with perhaps those of Nau and Troilo, and Russell's *Natural History of Aleppo*. We have now a vast accession to our knowledge of Oriental regions. Intelligent and observing men, impelled by the various motives of Christian zeal, military adventure, the love of gain, and

the love of science, have made their way, often at imminent risk, into every land rendered holy by the words of revelation. Through the medium of the pencil, as well as of the pen, we are even familiarly acquainted with the territories of the Bible. Valuable books of Eastern travel are abundant, of which the travels of Niebuhr, Mariti, Volney, Porter, Clarke, Chateaubriand, Burckhardt, Buckingham, Morier, Seetzen, De Lamartine, Laborde, Tournefort, Madden, Maddox, Wilkinson, Arundell, Mangles, Leigh, and Hogg, besides those already mentioned, are merely the principal, or the most extensively known. As we have said, however, the work before us is not to be lightly regarded; highly agreeable, interesting, and instructive, in a general view, it also has, in the connection now adverted to, claims to public attention possessed by no other book of its kind.

In an article prepared for this journal some months ago, we had traced the route of Mr. Stephens with a degree of minuteness not desirable now, when the work has been so long in the hands of the public. At this late day we must be content with saying, briefly, in regard to the earlier portion of the narrative, that, arriving at Alexandria in December, 1835, he thence passed up the Nile as far as the Lower Cataracts. One or two passages from this part of the tour may still be noted for observation. The annexed speculations in regard to the present city of Alexandria are well worth attention.

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"The present city of Alexandria, even after the dreadful ravages made by the plague last year, is still supposed to contain more than 50,000 inhabitants, and is decidedly growing. It stands outside the Delta in the Libyan Desert, and as Volney remarks: 'It is only by the canal which conducts the waters of the Nile into the reservoirs in the time of inundation, that Alexandria can be considered as connected with Egypt' Founded by the great Alexander to secure his conquests in the East, being the only safe harbor along the coast of Syria or Africa, and possessing peculiar commercial advantages, it soon grew into a giant city. Fifteen miles in circumference, containing a population of 300,000 citizens and as many slaves, one magnificent street, 2000 feet broad, ran the whole length of the city, from the Gate of the Sea to the Canopie Gate, commanding a view at each end of the shipping, either in the Mediterranean or in the Mareotic Lake, and another of equal length intersected it at right angles; a spacious circus without the Canopie Gate, for chariot-races, and on the east a splendid gymnasium more than six hundred feet in length, with theatres, baths, and all that could make it a desirable residence for a luxurious people. When it fell into the hands of the Saracens, according to the report of the Saracen general to the Caliph Omar, 'it was impossible to enumerate the variety of its riches and beauties'; and it is said to 'have contained four thousand palaces, four thousand

baths, four hundred theatres or public edifices, twelve thousand shops, and forty thousand tributary Jews.' From that time, like everything else which falls into the hands of the Mussulman, it has been going to ruin, and the discovery of the passage to India by the Cape of Good Hope gave the death-blow to its commercial greatness. At present it stands a phenomenon in the history of a Turkish dominion. It appears once more to be raising its head from the dust. It remains to be seen whether this rise is the legitimate and permanent effect of a wise and politic government, combined with natural advantages, or whether the pacha is not forcing it to an unnatural elevation at the expense, if not upon the ruins, of the rest of Egypt. It is almost presumptuous, on the threshold of my entrance into Egypt, to speculate upon the future condition of this interesting country; but it is clear that the pacha is determined to build up the city of Alexandria if he can: his fleet is here, his army, his arsenal, and his forts are here; and he has forced and centred here a commerce that was before divided between several places. Rosetta has lost more than two thirds of its population. Damietta has become a mere nothing, and even Cairo the Grand has become tributary to what is called the regenerated city."—Vol. I., pp. 21, 22.

We see no presumption in this attempt to speculate upon the future condition of Egypt. Its destinies are matter for the attentive consideration of every reader

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of the Bible. No words can be more definitive, more utterly free from ambiguity, than the prophecies concerning this region. No events could be more wonderful in their nature, or more impossible to have been foreseen by the eye of man, than the events foretold concerning it. With the earliest ages of the world its line of monarchs began, and the annihilation of the entire dynasty was predicted during the zenith of that dynasty's power. One of the most lucid of the Biblical commentators has justly observed that the very attempt once made by infidels to show, from the recorded number of its monarchs and the duration of their reigns, that Egypt was a kingdom previous to the Mosaic era of the deluge, places in the most striking view the extraordinary character of the prophecies regarding it. During two thousand years prior to these predictions Egypt had never been without a prince of its own; and how oppressive was its tyranny over Judea and the neighboring nations! It, however, was distinctly foretold that this country of kings should no longer have one of its own, that it should be laid waste by the hand of strangers, that it should be a base kingdom, the basest of the base, that it should never again exalt itself among the nations; that it should be a desolation surrounded by desolation. Two thousand years have now afforded their testimony to the infallibility of the Divine word, and the evidence is still accumulative. "Its past and present degeneracy bears

not a more remote resemblance to the former greatness and pride of its power, than the frailty of its mud-walled fabric now bears to the stability of its imperishable pyramids." But it should be remembered that there are other prophecies concerning it which still await their fulfilment. The whole earth shall rejoice, and Egypt shall not be forever base. "The Lord shall smite Egypt; he shall smite and heal it; and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be intreated of them and shall heal them. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land."—Isa. xix., 22, 24. In regard to the present degree of political power and importance to which the country has certainly arisen under Mohammed Aly (an importance unknown for many centuries), the fact, as Mr. Keith observes in his valuable *Evidences of Prophecy*, may possibly serve, at no distant period, to illustrate the prediction which implies that, however base and degraded it might be throughout many generations, it would, notwithstanding, have strength sufficient to be looked to for aid or protection, even at the time of the restoration of the Jews to Judea, who will seek "to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and trust in the shadow of Egypt." How emphatically her present feeble prosperity is, after all, but the shadow of the Egypt of the Pharaohs, we leave to the explorer of her pyramids, the wanderer among the

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tombs of her kings or the fragments of her Luxor and her Carnac.

At Djiddeh, formerly the capital of Upper Egypt and the largest town on the Nile, Mr. Stephens encountered two large boat-loads of slaves—probably five or six hundred—collected at Dongola and Sennaar. “In the East,” he writes, “slavery exists now, precisely as it did in the days of the patriarchs. The slave is received into the family of a Turk, in a relation more confidential and respectable than that of an ordinary domestic; and when liberated, which very often happens, stands upon the same footing with a freeman. The curse does not rest upon him forever; he may sit at the same board, dip his hand in the same dish, and, if there are no other impediments, may marry his master’s daughter.”

Morier says, in his *Journey through Persia*: “The manners of the East, amidst all the changes of government and religion, are still the same. They are living impressions from an original mould; and at every step some object, some idiom, some dress, or some custom of common life, reminds the traveller of ancient times, and confirms, above all, the beauty, the accuracy, and the propriety of the language and the history of the Bible.”

Sir John Chardin, also, in the preface to his *Travels in Persia*, employs similar language: “And the learned, to whom I communicated my design, encouraged me

very much by their commendations to proceed in it; and more especially when I informed them that it is not in Asia, as in our Europe, where there are frequent changes, more or less, in the form of things, as the habits, buildings, gardens, and the like. In the East they are constant in all things. The habits are at this day in the same manner as in the precedent ages; so that one may reasonably believe that, in that part of the world, the exterior forms of things (as their manners and customs) are the same now as they were two thousand years since, except in such changes as have been introduced by religion, which are, nevertheless, very inconsiderable."

Nor is such striking testimony unsupported. From all sources we derive evidence of the conformity, almost of the identity of the modern with the ancient usages of the East. This steadfast resistance to innovation is a trait remarkably confined to the regions of Biblical history, and (it should not be doubted) will remain in force until it shall have fulfilled all the important purposes of Biblical elucidation. Hereafter, when the ends of Providence shall be thoroughly answered, it will not fail to give way before the influence of that very Word it has been instrumental in establishing; and the tide of civilization, which has hitherto flowed continuously from the rising to the setting sun, will be driven back, with a partial ebb, into its original channels.

Returning from the cataracts, Mr. Stephens found

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himself safely at Cairo, where terminated his journeys upon the Nile. He had passed "from Migdol to Syene, even unto the borders of Ethiopia." In regard to the facilities, comforts, and minor enjoyments of the voyage, he speaks of them in a manner so favorable that many of our young countrymen will be induced to follow his example. It is an amusement, he says, even ridiculously cheap, and attended with no degree of danger. A boat with ten men is procured for thirty or forty dollars a month, fowls for three piastres a pair, a sheep for a half or three quarters of a dollar, and eggs for the asking. "You sail under your own country's banner; and when you walk along the river, if the Arabs look particularly black and truculent, you proudly feel that there is safety in its folds."

We now approach what is by far the most interesting and the most important portion of his tour. Mr. S. had resolved to visit Mount Sinai, proceeding thence to the Holy Land. If he should return to Suez, and thus cross the desert to El Arich and Gaza, he would be subjected to a quarantine of fourteen days, on account of the plague in Egypt; and this difficulty might be avoided by striking through the heart of the desert lying between Mount Sinai and the frontier of Palestine. This route was beset with danger; but, apart from the matter of avoiding quarantine, it had other strong temptations for the enterprise and enthusiasm of the traveller,—temptations not to be resisted. "The

route," says Mr. Stephens, "was hitherto untravelled"; and, moreover, it lay through a region upon which has long rested, and still rests, a remarkable curse of the Divinity, issued through the voices of His prophets. We allude to the land of Idumea,—the Edom of the Scriptures. Some English friends, who first suggested this route to Mr. Stephens, referred him for information concerning it to Keith on the Prophecies. Mr. Keith, as our readers are aware, contends for the literal fulfilment of prophecy, and in the treatise in question brings forward a mass of evidence and a world of argument, which we, at least, are constrained to consider, as a whole, irrefutable. We look upon the literalness of the understanding of the Bible predictions as an essential feature in prophecy, conceiving minuteness of detail to have been but a portion of the providential plan of the Deity for bringing more visibly to light, in after-ages, the evidence of the fulfilment of his word. No general meaning attached to a prediction, no general fulfilment of such prediction could carry, to the reason of mankind, inferences so unquestionable as its particular and minutely incidental accomplishment. General statements, except in rare instances, are susceptible of misinterpretation or misapplication; details admit no shadow of ambiguity. That, in many striking cases, the words of the prophets have been brought to pass in every particular of a series of minutiae, whose very meaning was unintelligible before the period of

fulfilment, is a truth that few are so utterly stubborn as to deny. We mean to say that, in all instances, the most strictly literal interpretation will apply. There is, no doubt, much unbelief founded upon the obscurity of the prophetic expression; and the question is frequently demanded: "Wherein lies the use of this obscurity? why are not the prophecies distinct?" These words, it is said, are incoherent, unintelligible, and should be therefore regarded as untrue. That many prophecies are absolutely unintelligible should not be denied; it is a part of their essence that they should be. The obscurity, like the apparently irrelevant detail, has its object in the providence of God. Were the words of inspiration, affording insight into the events of futurity, at all times so pointedly clear that he who runs might read, they would in many cases, even when fulfilled, afford a rational ground for unbelief in the inspiration of their authors, and consequently in the whole truth of revelation; for it would be supposed that these distinct words, exciting union and emulation among Christians, had thus been merely the means of working out their own accomplishment. It is for this reason that the most of the predictions become intelligible only when viewed from the proper point of observation,—the period of fulfilment. Perceiving this, the philosophical thinker and the Christian will draw no argument from the obscurity against the verity of prophecy. Having seen palpably,

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incontrovertibly fulfilled, even one of these many wonderful predictions, of whose meaning, until the day of accomplishment, he could form no conception; and having thoroughly satisfied himself that no human foresight could have been equal to such amount of foreknowledge, he will await in confident expectation that moment certainly to come when the darkness of the veil shall be uplifted from the others.¹

¹ We cannot do better than quote here the words of a writer in the *London Quarterly Review*. "Twenty years ago we read certain portions of the prophetic Scriptures with a belief that they were true, because other similar passages had in the course of ages been proved to be so; and we had an indistinct notion that all these, to us obscure and indefinite denunciations, had been—we knew not very well when or how—accomplished; but to have graphic descriptions, ground plans, and elevations showing the actual existence of all the heretofore vague and shadowy denunciations of God against Edom, does, we confess, excite our feelings and exalt our confidence in prophecy to a height that no external evidence has hitherto done."

Many prophecies, it should be remembered, are in a state of gradual fulfilment, a chain of evidence being thus made to extend throughout a long series of ages, for the benefit of man at large, without being confined to one epoch or generation, which would be the case in a fulfilment suddenly coming to pass. Thus, some portion of the prophecies concerning Edom has reference to the year of recompense for the controversy of Sion.

One word in regard to the work of Keith. Since penning this article we have been grieved to see, in a New York daily paper, some strictures on this well-known treatise, which we think unnecessary, if not positively unjust; and which, indeed, are little more than a revival of the old story trumped up, for purposes of its own, and in the most bitter spirit of unfairness, by the *London Quarterly Review*. We allude especially to the charge of plagiarism from the work of Bishop Newton. It would be quite as reasonable to accuse Dr. Webster of having stolen his Dictionary from Dr. Johnson, or any other compiler of having plundered any other. But the work of Keith, as we learn from himself, was written hastily, for the immediate service and at the urgent solicitation of a friend, whose faith wavered in regard to the evidences of prophecy, and who applied to the author to aid his unbelief with a condensed view of these evidences. In the preface of the book thus composed, with no view to any merits of authorship, and, indeed, with none except that of immediate utility, there is found the fullest disclaimer of all pretension to originality,—surely motives and circumstances such as these should have sufficed to secure Dr. Keith from the unmeaning charges of plagiarism, which have been so pertinaciously adduced! We do not mean to deny that, in the blindness

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Having expressed our belief in the literal fulfilment of prophecy in all cases,¹ and having suggested, as one reason for the non-prevalence of this belief, the improper point of view from which we are accustomed to regard it, it remains to be seen what were the principal predictions in respect to Idumea.

"From generation to generation it shall lie waste; *none shall pass through it* for ever and ever. But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it; and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof; and it shall be an habitation of dragons and a court for owls. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech-owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay and hatch, and gather under her shadow; there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate. Seek ye out of the Book of

of his zeal, and in the firm conviction entertained by him of the general truth of his assumptions, he frequently adopted surmises as facts, and did essential injury to his cause by carrying out his positions to an unwarrantable length. With all its inaccuracies, however, his work must still be regarded as one of the most important triumphs of faith, and, beyond doubt, as a most lucid and conclusive train of argument.

¹ Of course it will be understood that a proper allowance must be made for the usual hyperbolical tendency of the language of the East.

the Lord and read; no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate; for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them. And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line; they shall possess it for ever and ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein."—Isaiah xxxiv., 10-17. "Thus will I make Mount Seir most desolate, and *cut off from it him that passeth out and him that returneth.*"—Ezekiel xxxv., 7.

In regard to such of the passages here quoted as are not printed in italics, we must be content with referring to the treatise of Keith already mentioned, wherein the evidences of the fulfilment of the predictions in their most minute particulars are gathered into one view. We may as well, however, present here the substance of his observations respecting the words, "None shall pass through it for ever and ever"; and "Thus will I make Mount Seir desolate and cut off from it him that passeth out and him that returneth."

He says that Volney, Burckhardt, Joliffe, Henniker, and Captains Irby and Mangles, adduce a variety of circumstances, all conspiring to prove that Idumea, which was long resorted to from every quarter, is so beset on every side with dangers to the traveller, that literally none pass through it; that even the Arabs of the neighboring regions, whose home is the desert, and whose occupation is wandering, are afraid

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to enter it or to conduct any within its borders. He says, too, that amid all this manifold testimony to its truth, there is not, in any single instance, the most distant allusion to the prediction that the evidence is unsuspicious and undesigned.

A Roman road passed directly through Idumea from Jerusalem to Akaba, and another from Akaba to Moab; and when these roads were made, at a time long posterior to the date of the predictions, the conception could not have been formed or held credible by man, that the period would ever arrive when none should pass through it. Indeed, seven hundred years after the date of the prophecy, we are informed by Strabo that the roads were actually in use. The prediction is yet more surprising, he says, when viewed in conjunction with that which implies that travellers should pass by Idumea,—“every one that goeth by shall be astonished.” The routes of the pilgrims from Damascus, and from Cairo to Mecca, the one on the east and the other toward the south of Edom, along the whole of its extent, go by it, or touch partially on its borders, without going through it.

Not even, he says, the cases of Seetzen and Burckhardt can be urged against the literal fulfilment, although Seetzen actually did pass through Idumea, and Burckhardt traversed a considerable portion of it. The former died not long after the completion of his journey; and the latter never recovered from the effects

of the hardships endured on the route—dying at Cairo. “Neither of them”—we have given the precise words of Mr. Keith—“lived to return to Europe. ‘I will cut off from Mount Seir him that passeth out and him that returneth.’” Strabo mentions that there was a direct road from Petra to Jericho of three or four days’ journey. Captains Irby and Mangles were eighteen days in reaching it from Jerusalem. They did not pass through Idumea and they did return. Seetzen and Burckhardt did pass through it and they did not return.”

“The words of the prediction,” he elsewhere observes, “might well be understood as merely implying that Idumea would cease to be a thoroughfare for the commerce of the nations which adjoined it, and that its highly frequented marts would be forsaken as centres of intercourse and traffic; and easy would have been the task of demonstrating its truth in this limited sense which scepticism itself ought not to be unwilling to authorize.”

Here is, no doubt, much inaccuracy and misunderstanding; and the exact boundaries of ancient Edom are apparently not borne in mind by the commentator. Idumea proper was, strictly speaking, only the mountainous tract of country east of the valley of El-Ghor. The Idumeans, if we rightly apprehend, did not get possession of any portion of the south of Judea till after the exile, and consequently until after the prophe-

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cies in question. They then advanced as far as Hebron, where they were arrested by the Maccabees. That "Seetzen actually did pass through Idumea," cannot therefore be asserted; and thus, much is in favor of the whole argument of Dr. Keith, while in contradiction to a branch of that argument. The traveller in question (see his own narrative), pursuing his route on the east of the Dead Sea, proceeded no farther in this direction than to Kerek, when he retraced his way, afterward going from Hebron to Mount Sinai, over the desert eastward of Edom. Neither is it strictly correct that he "died not long after the completion of his journey." Several years afterward he was actively employed in Egypt, and finally died; not from constitutional injury sustained from any former adventure, but, if we remember, from the effects of poison administered by his guide in a journey from Mocha into the heart of Arabia. We see no ground either for the statement that Burckhardt owed his death to hardships endured in Idumea. Having visited Petra, and crossed the western desert of Egypt in the year 1812, we find him, four years afterward, sufficiently well, at Mount Sinai. He did not die until the close of 1817, and then of a diarrhoea brought about by the imprudent use of cold water.

But let us dismiss these and some other instances of mssitatemt. It should not be a matter of surprise that, perceiving, as he no doubt did, the object of the

circumstantiality of prophecy, clearly seeing in how many wonderful cases its minutiae had been fulfilled, and, withal, being thoroughly imbued with a love of truth, and with that zeal which is becoming in a Christian, Dr. Keith should have plunged somewhat hastily or blindly into these inquiries and pushed to an improper extent the principle for which he contended. It should be observed that the passage cited just above in regard to Seetzen and Burckhardt is given in a footnote, and has the appearance of an afterthought, about whose propriety its author did not feel perfectly content. It is certainly very difficult to reconcile the literal fulfilment of the prophecy with an acknowledgment militating so violently against it as we find in his own words: "Seetzen actually did pass through Idumea, and Burckhardt travelled through a considerable portion of it." And what we are told subsequently in respect to Irby and Mangles, and Seetzen and Burckhardt, that those did not pass through Idumea and did return, while these did pass through and did not return, where a passage from Ezekiel is brought to sustain collaterally a passage from Isaiah, is certainly not in the spirit of literal investigation, partaking, indeed, somewhat of *équivoque*.

But in regard to the possibility of the actual passage through Edom, we might now consider all ambiguity at an end, could we suffer ourselves to adopt the opinion of Mr. Stephens, that he himself had at length

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traversed the disputed region. What we have said already, however, respecting the proper boundaries of that Idumea to which the prophecies have allusion will assure the reader that we cannot entertain this idea. It will be clearly seen that he did not pass through the Edom of Ezekiel. That he might have done so, however, is sufficiently evident. The indomitable perseverance which bore him up amid the hardships and dangers of the route actually traversed would, beyond doubt, have sufficed to ensure him a successful passage even through Idumea the proper. And this we say, maintaining still an unhesitating belief in the literal understanding of the prophecies. It is essential, however, that these prophecies be literally rendered; and it is a matter for regret as well as surprise that Dr. Keith should have failed to determine so important a point as the exactness or falsity of the version of his text. This we will now briefly examine.

Isaiah xxxiv., 10:

לְעוֹלָמִים—"For an eternity,"

נֶצֶחִים—"of eternities,"

אֵין—"not,"

עַכְר—"moving about,"

: בָּה—"in it."

"For an eternity of eternities (there shall) not (be any one) moving about in it." The literal meaning of "בָּה" is "in it," not "through it." The participle "עַכְר" "

refers to one moving to and fro or up and down, and is the same term which is rendered "current," as an epithet of money, in Genesis xxiii., 16. The prophet means that there shall be no marks of life in the land, no living being there, no one moving up and down in it; and are, of course, to be taken with the usual allowance for that hyperbole which is a main feature, and indeed the genius, of the language.

Ezekiel xxxv., 7:

- יִנְתַּחֲיוּ—"and I will give,"
- אֶת־הָר—"the mountain,"
- שֵׂעִיר—"Seir,"
- לְשֻׁמְמָה—"for a desolation,"
- וְשֻׁמְמָה—"and a desolation,"
- וְחִכְרֹתִי—"and I will cut off,"
- מִטְפָּח—"from it,"
- עֹבֵר—"him that goeth,"
- וְשָׁב—"and him that returneth."

"And I will give Mount Seir for an utter desolation, and will cut off from it him that passeth and repasseth therein." The reference here is the same as in the previous passage, and the inhabitants of the land are alluded to as moving about therein, and actively employed in the business of life. The meaning of "passing and repassing" is sanctioned by Gesenius, s. v. vol. 2, p. 570, Leo's trans. Compare Zachariah vii., 14, and ix., 8. There is something analogous in the Hebrew-Greek phrase occurring in Acts ix., 28: *Kαὶ ἦν μετ'*

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αὐτῶν εἰσπορευόμενος καὶ ἐκπορευόμενος ἐν Ἱερουσαλημ—“ And he was with them in Jerusalem coming in and going out.” The Latin “versatus est” conveys the meaning precisely; which is, that Saul, the new convert, was on intimate terms with the true believers in Jerusalem, moving about among them to and fro, or in and out. It is plain, therefore, that the words of the prophets, in both cases, and when literally construed, intend only to predict the general desolation and abandonment of the land. Indeed, it should be taken into consideration that a strict prohibition on the part of the Deity of an entrance into, or passage through, Idumea would have effectually cut off from mankind all evidence of this prior sentence of desolation and abandonment; the prediction itself being thus rendered a dead letter, when viewed in regard to its ulterior and most important purpose—the dissemination of the faith.

Mr. Stephens was strongly dissuaded from his design. Almost the only person who encouraged him was Mr. Gliddon, our consul; and but for him the idea would have been abandoned. The dangers, indeed, were many, and the difficulties more. By good fortune, however, the Sheik of Akaba was then at Cairo. The great yearly caravan of pilgrims for Mecca was assembling beneath the walls, and he had been summoned by the pacha to escort and protect them through the desert as far as Akaba. He was the chief of a powerful

tribe of Bedouins, maintaining, in all its vigor, the independence of their race and bidding defiance to the pacha while they yielded him such obedience as comported with their own immediate interests.

With this potentate our traveller entered into negotiation. The precise service required of him was to conduct Mr. Stephens from Akaba to Hebron, through the land of Edom, diverging to visit the excavated city of Petra, a journey of about ten days. A very indefinite arrangement was at length made. Mr. Stephens, after visiting Mount Sinai, was to repair to Akaba, where he would meet the escort of the Bedouin. With a view to protection on his way from Cairo to the Holy Mountain, the latter gave him his signet, which he told him would be respected by all Arabs on the route.

The arrangements for the journey as far as Mount Sinai had been made for our traveller by Mr. Gliddon. A Bedouin was procured as guide who had been with M. Laborde to Petra, and whose faith, as well as capacity, could be depended upon. The caravan consisted of eight camels and dromedaries, with three young Arabs as drivers. The tent was the common tent of the Egyptian soldiers, bought at the government factory, being very light, easily carried and pitched. The bedding was a mattress and coverlet; provision, bread, biscuit, rice, macaroni, tea, coffee, dried apricots, oranges, a roasted leg of mutton, and two large skins containing the filtered water of the Nile. Thus

equipped, the party struck immediately into the desert lying between Cairo and Suez, reaching the latter place with but little incident, after a journey of four days. At Suez, our traveller, wearied with his experiment of the dromedary, made an attempt to hire a boat, with a view of proceeding down the Red Sea to Tor, supposed to be the Elino, or place of palm-trees mentioned in the Exodus of the Israelites, and only two days' journey from Mount Sinai. The boats, however, were all taken by pilgrims, and none could be procured—at least for so long a voyage. He accordingly sent off his camels round the head of the gulf, and crossing himself by water, met them on the Petræan side of the sea.

"I am aware," says Mr. Stephens, "that there is some dispute as to the precise spot where Moses crossed; but having no time for scepticism on such matters, I began by making up my mind that this was the place, and then looked around to see whether, according to the account given in the Bible, the face of the country and the natural landmarks did not sustain my opinion. I remember I looked up to the head of the gulf, where Suez or Kolsum now stands, and saw that almost to the very head of the gulf there was a high range of mountains which it would be necessary to cross, an undertaking which it would have been physically impossible for 600,000 people—men, women, and children—to accomplish with a hostile army pursuing

them. At Suez, Moses could not have been hemmed in as he was; he could go off into the Syrian desert, or, unless the sea has greatly changed since that time, round the head of the gulf. But here, directly opposite where I sat, was an opening in the mountains, making a clear passage from the desert to the shore of the sea. It is admitted that from the earliest history of the country there was a caravan route from the Rameses of the Pharaohs to this spot, and it was perfectly clear to my mind that, if the account be true at all, Moses had taken that route; that it was directly opposite me, between the two mountains, where he had come down with his multitude to the shore, and that it was there he had found himself hemmed in, in the manner described in the Bible, with the sea before him and the army of Pharaoh in his rear; it was there he stretched out his hand and divided the waters; and probably on the very spot where I sat, the children of Israel had kneeled upon the sands to offer thanks to God for his miraculous interposition. The distance, too, was in confirmation of this opinion. It was about twenty miles across; the distance which that immense multitude, with their necessary baggage, could have passed in the space of time (a night) mentioned in the Bible. Besides my own judgment and conclusions, I had authority on the spot, in my Bedouin Toualeb, who talked of it with as much certainty as if he had seen it himself; and by the waning light of the moon, pointed

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out the metes and bounds according to the tradition received from his fathers."

Mr. Stephens is here greatly in error, and has placed himself in direct opposition to all authority on the subject. It is quite evident that since the days of the miracle the sea has "greatly changed" round the head of the gulf. It is now several feet lower, as appears from the alluvial condition of several bitter lakes in the vicinity. On this topic Niebuhr, who examined the matter with his accustomed learning, acumen, and perseverance, is indisputable authority. But he merely agrees with all the most able writers on this head. The passage occurred at Suez. The chief arguments sustaining this position are deduced from the ease by which the miracle could have been wrought, on a sea so shaped, by means of a strong wind blowing from the northeast.

Resuming his journey to the southward, our traveller passed safely through a barren and mountainous region, bare of verdure and destitute of water, in about seven days, to Mt. Sinai. It is to be regretted that in his account of a country so little traversed as this peninsula, Mr. Stephens has not entered more into detail. Upon his adventures at the Holy Mountain, which are of great interest, he dwells somewhat at length.

At Akaba he met the Sheik as by agreement. A horse of the best breed of Arabia was provided, and, although suffering from ill-health, he proceeded

manfully through the desert to Petra and Mount Hor. The difficulties of the route proved to be chiefly those arising from the rapacity of his friend, the Sheik of Akaba, who threw a thousand impediments in his way with the purpose of magnifying the importance of the service rendered, and obtaining, in consequence, the larger allowance of *bakshish*.

The account given of Petra agrees in all important particulars with those rendered by the very few travellers who had previously visited it. With these accounts our readers are sufficiently acquainted. The singular character of the city, its vast antiquity, its utter loss, for more than a thousand years, to the eyes of the civilized world; and, above all, the solemn denunciations of prophecy regarding it, have combined to invest these ruins with an interest beyond that of any others in existence, and to render what has been written concerning them familiar knowledge to nearly every individual who reads.

Leaving Petra, after visiting Mount Hor, Mr. Stephens returned to the valley of El-Ghor and fell into the caravan route for Gaza, which crosses the valley obliquely. Coming out from the ravine among the mountains to the westward, he here left the road to Gaza and pushed immediately on to Hebron. This distance (between the Gaza route and Hebron) is, we believe, the only positively new route accomplished by our American tourist. We understand that, in 1826,

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Messieurs Strangeways and Anson passed over the ground on the Gaza road from Petra to the point where it deviates for Hebron. On the part of Mr. Stephens's course which we have thus designated as new, it is well known that a great public road existed in the later days of the Roman Empire, and that several cities were located immediately upon it. Mr. Stephens discovered some ruins, but his state of health, unfortunately, prevented a minute investigation. Those which he encountered are represented as forming rude and shapeless masses; there were no columns, no blocks of marble, or other large stones, indicating architectural greatness. The Pentinger Tables place Helusa in this immediate vicinity, and, but for the character of the ruins seen, we might have supposed them to be the remnants of that city.

The latter part of our author's second volume is occupied with his journeyings in the Holy Land, and principally with an account of his visit to Jerusalem. What relates to the Dead Sea we are induced to consider as, upon the whole, the most interesting, if not the most important portion of his book. It was his original intention to circumnavigate this lake, but the difficulty of procuring a boat proved an obstacle not to be surmounted. He traversed, nevertheless, no little extent of its shores, bathed in it, saw distinctly that the Jordan does mingle with its waters, and that birds floated upon it and flew over its surface.

But it is time that we conclude. Mr. Stephens passed through Samaria and Galilee, stopping at Nablous, the ancient Sychem; the burial-place of the patriarch Joseph, and the ruins of Sebaste; crossed the battle-plain of Jezreel; ascended Mount Tabor; visited Nazareth, the Lake of Gennesareth, the cities of Tiberias and Saphet, Mount Carmel, Acre, Sour, and Sidon. At Beyroot he took passage for Alexandria, and thence finally returned to Europe.

The volumes are written in general with a freedom, a frankness, and an utter absence of pretension which will secure them the respect and good-will of all parties. The author professes to have compiled his narrative merely from "brief notes and recollections," admitting that he has probably fallen into errors regarding facts and impressions,—errors he has been prevented from seeking out and correcting by the urgency of other occupations since his return. We have, therefore, thought it quite as well not to trouble our readers, in this cursory review, with references to parallel travels, now familiar, and whose merits and demerits are sufficiently well understood.

We take leave of Mr. Stephens with sentiments of hearty respect. We hope it is not the last time we shall hear from him. He is a traveller with whom we shall like to take other journeys. Equally free from the exaggerated sentimentality of Chateaubriand, or the sublimated, the too French enthusiasm of Lamar-

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tine on the one hand, and on the other from the degrading spirit of utilitarianism, which sees in mountains and waterfalls only quarries and manufacturing sites, Mr. Stephens writes like a man of good sense and sound feeling.





Old English Poetry¹

KT should not be doubted that at least one third of the affection with which we regard the older poets of Great Britain should be attributed to what is, in itself, a thing apart from poetry,—we mean to the simple love of the antique; and that, again, a third of even the proper poetic sentiment inspired by their writings should be ascribed to a fact which, while it has strict connection with poetry in the abstract, and with the old British poems themselves, should not be looked upon as a merit appertaining to the authors of the poems. Almost every devout admirer of the old bards, if demanded his opinion of their productions, would mention vaguely, yet with perfect sincerity, a sense of dreamy, wild, indefinite, and, he would perhaps say indefinable delight; on being required to point out the source of this so shadowy pleasure he would be apt to speak of the quaint in phraseology and in general handling. This quaintness

¹ *The Book of Gems.* Edited by S. C. Hall.

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is, in fact, a very powerful adjunct to ideality, but in the case in question it arises independently of the author's will, and is altogether apart from his intention. Words and their rhythm have varied. Verses which affect us to-day with a vivid delight, and which delight, in many instances, may be traced to the one source, quaintness, must have worn in the days of their construction a very commonplace air. This is, of course, no argument against the poems now; we mean it only as against the poets then. There is a growing desire to overrate them. The old English muse was frank, guileless, sincere, and although very learned, still learned without art. No general error evinces a more thorough confusion of ideas than the error of supposing Donne and Cowley metaphysical in the sense wherein Wordsworth and Coleridge are so. With the two former, ethics were the end; with the two latter, the means. The poet of the *Creation* wished, by highly artificial verse, to inculcate what he supposed to be moral truth; the poet of the *Ancient Mariner* to infuse the Poetic Sentiment through channels suggested by analysis. The one finished by complete failure what he commenced in the grossest misconception; the other, by a path which could not possibly lead him astray, arrived at a triumph which is not the less glorious because hidden from the profane eyes of the multitude. But in this view even the "metaphysical verse" of Cowley is but evidence of the simplicity and

single-heartedness of the man. And he was in this but a type of his school, for we may as well designate in this way the entire class of writers whose poems are bound up in the volume before us, and throughout all of whom there runs a very perceptible general character. They used little art in composition. Their writings sprang immediately from the soul, and partook intensely of that soul's nature. Nor is it difficult to perceive the tendency of this abandon to elevate immeasurably all the energies of mind; but, again, so to mingle the greatest possible fire, force, delicacy, and all good things with the lowest possible bathos, baldness, and imbecility, as to render it not a matter of doubt that the average results of mind in such a school will be found inferior to those results in one (*cæteris paribus*) more artificial.

We cannot bring ourselves to believe that the selections of the *Book of Gems* are such as will impart to a poetical reader the clearest possible idea of the beauty of the school; but if the intention had been merely to show the school's character, the attempt might have been considered successful in the highest degree. There are long passages now before us of the most despicable trash, with no merit whatever beyond that of their antiquity. The criticisms of the editor do not particularly please us. His enthusiasm is too general and too vivid not to be false. His opinion, for example, of Sir Henry Wotton's *Verses on the Queen*

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of Bohemia, that “there are few finer things in our language,” is untenable and absurd.

In such lines we can perceive not one of those higher attributes of Poesy which belong to her in all circumstances and throughout all time. Here everything is art, nakedly, or but awkwardly, concealed. No prepossession for the mere antique (and in this case we can imagine no other prepossession) should induce us to dignify with the sacred name of poetry a series, such as this, of elaborate and threadbare compliments; stitched, apparently, together without fancy, without plausibility, and without even an attempt at adaptation.

In common with all the world, we have been much delighted with *The Shepherd's Hunting*, by Wither; a poem partaking, in a remarkable degree, of the peculiarities of *Il Pensero*. Speaking of Poesy, the author says:

By the murmur of a spring,
Or the least bough's rustling,
By a daisy whose leaves spread
Shut when Titan goes to bed,
Or a shady bush or tree,
She could more infuse on me
Than all Nature's beauties can
In some other wiser man.
By her help I also now
Make this churlish place allow
Something that may sweeten gladness
In the very gall of sadness.

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The dull loneliness, the black shade,
That these hanging vaults have made,
The strange music of the waves
Beating on these hollow caves,
This black den which rocks emboss,
Overgrown with eldest moss,
The rude portals that give light
More to terror than delight,
This my chamber of neglect
Walled about with disrespect,
From all these and this dull air,
A fit object for despair,
She hath taught me by her might
To draw comfort and delight.

But these lines, however good, do not bear with them much of the general character of the English antique. Something more of this will be found in Corbet's *Rewards and Fairies*. We copy a portion of Marvell's *Maiden Lamenting for her Fawn*, which we prefer, not only as a specimen of the elder poets, but in itself as a beautiful poem, abounding in pathos, exquisitely delicate imagination and truthfulness, to anything of its species:

It is a wondrous thing how fleet
'T was on those little silver feet;
With what a pretty skipping grace
It oft would challenge me the race,
And when 't had left me far away
'T would stay, and run again, and stay;

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For it was nimbler much than hinds,
And trod as if on the four winds.
I have a garden of my own,
But so with roses overgrown,
And lilies, that you would it guess
To be a little wilderness;
And all the spring-time of the year
It only loved to be there.
Among the beds of lilies I
Have sought it oft, where it should lie,
Yet could not, till itself would rise,
Find it, although before mine eyes.
For in the flaxen lilies' shade
It like a bank of lilies laid;
Upon the roses it would feed
Until its lips even seemed to bleed,
And then to me 't would boldly trip,
And print those roses on my lip;
But all its chief delight was still
With roses thus itself to fill,
And its pure virgin limbs to fold
In whitest sheets of lilies cold.
Had it lived long it would have been
Lilies without, roses within.

How truthful an air of lamentation hangs here upon every syllable! It pervades all. It comes over the sweet melody of the words; over the gentleness and grace which we fancy in the little maiden herself; even over the half-playful, half-petulant air with which she lingers on the beauties and good qualities of her favorite, like the cool shadow of a summer cloud over a bed

of lilies and violets "and all sweet flowers." The whole is redolent of poetry of a very lofty order. Every line is an idea conveying either the beauty and playfulness of the fawn, or the artlessness of the maiden, or her love, or her admiration, or her grief, or the fragrance and warmth and appropriateness of the little nest-like bed of lilies and roses which the fawn devoured as it lay upon them, and could scarcely be distinguished from them by the once happy little damsel who went to seek her pet with an arch and rosy smile on her face. Consider the great variety of truthful and delicate thought in the few lines we have quoted: the wonder of the little maiden at the fleetness of her favorite; the "little silver feet"; the fawn challenging his mistress to a race with "a pretty skipping grace," running on before, and then, with head turned back, awaiting her approach only to fly from it again—can we not distinctly perceive all these things? How exceedingly vigorous, too, is the line

And trod as if on the four winds!

a vigor apparent only when we keep in mind the artless character of the speaker and the four feet of the favorite, one for each wind. Then consider the garden of "my own," so overgrown, entangled with roses and lilies, as to be "a little wilderness," the fawn loving to be there and there "only"; the maiden seeking it "where it should lie," and not being able to distin-

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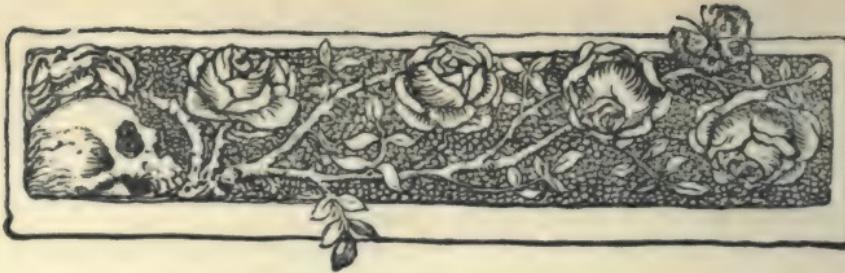
guish it from the flowers until "itself would rise"; the lying among the lilies "like a bank of lilies"; the loving to "fill itself with roses,"

And its pure virgin limbs to fold
In whitest sheets of lilies cold;

and these things being its "chief" delights; and then the pre-eminent beauty and naturalness of the concluding lines, whose very hyperbole only renders them more true to nature when we consider the innocence, the artlessness, the enthusiasm, the passionate grief, and more passionate admiration of the bereaved child:

Had it lived long it would have been
Lilies without, roses within.





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THERE are few cases in which mere popularity should be considered a proper test of merit; but the case of song-writing is, I think, one of the few. In speaking of song-writing, I mean, of course, the composition of brief poems with an eye to their adaptation for music in the vulgar sense. In this ultimate destination of the song proper lies its essence, its genius. It is the strict reference to music, it is the dependence upon modulated expression, which gives to this branch of letters a character altogether unique and separates it, in great measure and in a manner not sufficiently considered, from ordinary literature; rendering it independent of merely ordinary proprieties; allowing it, and in fact demanding for it, a wide latitude of law; absolutely insisting upon a certain wild license and indefinitiveness, an indefinitiveness recognized by every musician who is not a mere fiddler, as an important point in the philosophy of his science, as the soul, indeed, of the sensations

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derivable from its practice,—sensations which bewilder while they enthrall, and which would not so enthrall if they did not so bewilder.

The sentiments deducible from the conception of sweet sound simply are out of the reach of analysis, although, referable, possibly, in their last result, to that merely mathematical recognition of equality which seems to be the root of all beauty. Our impressions of harmony and melody in conjunction are more readily analyzed; but one thing is certain, that the sentimental pleasure derivable from music is nearly in the ratio of its indefinitiveness. Give to music any undue decision, imbue it with any very determinate tone, and you deprive it at once of its ethereal, its ideal, and, I sincerely believe, of its intrinsic and essential character. You dispel its dream-like luxury; you dissolve the atmosphere of the mystic in which its whole nature is bound up; you exhaust it of its breath of faery. It then becomes a tangible and easily appreciable thing, a conception of the earth, earthy. It will not, to be sure, lose all its power to please, but all that I consider the distinctiveness of that power. And to the over-cultivated talent, or to the unimaginative apprehension, this deprivation of its most delicate nare will be, not unfrequently, a recommendation. A determinateness of expression is sought,—and sometimes by composers who should know better,—is sought as a beauty, rather than rejected as a blemish. Thus we have, even from

high authorities, attempts at absolute imitation in musical sounds. Who can forget, or cease to regret, the many errors of this kind into which some great minds have fallen, simply through overestimating the triumphs of skill. Who can help lamenting the *Battle of Pragues*? What man of taste is not ready to laugh, or to weep, over their "guns, drums, trumpets, blunderbusses, and thunder"? "Vocal music," says L'Abbaté Gravina, "ought to imitate the natural language of the human feelings and passions rather than the warbling of canary-birds, which our singers now-a-days affect so vastly to mimic with their quaverings and boasted cadences." This is true only so far as the "rather" is concerned. If any music must imitate anything, it were undoubtedly better that the imitation should be limited as Gravina suggests.

That indefiniteness which is at least one of the essentials of true music, must, of course, be kept in view by the song-writer; while, by the critic, it should always be considered in his estimate of the song. It is, in the author, a consciousness, sometimes merely an instinctive appreciation, of this necessity for the indefinite which imparts to all songs, richly conceived, that free, affluent, and hearty manner, little scrupulous about niceties of phrase, which cannot be better expressed than by the hackneyed French word *abandonnement*, and which is so strikingly exemplified in both the serious and joyous ballads and carols of our

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old English progenitors. Wherever verse has been found most strictly married to music this feature prevails. It is thus the essence of all antique song. It is the soul of Homer. It is the spirit of Anacreon. It is even the genius of Æschylus. Coming down to our own times, it is the vital principle in De Béranger. Wanting this quality, no song-writer was ever truly popular, and, for the reasons assigned, no song-writer need ever expect to be so.

These views properly understood, it will be seen how baseless are the ordinary objections to songs proper, on the score of "conceit" (to use Johnson's word), or of hyperbole, or on various other grounds tenable enough in respect to poetry not designed for music. The "conceit," for example, which some envious rivals of Morris have so much objected to—

Her heart and morning broke together
In the storm—

this "conceit" is merely in keeping with the essential spirit of the song proper. To all reasonable persons it will be sufficient to say that the fervid, hearty, free-spoken songs of Cowley and of Donne, more especially of Cunningham, of Harrington, and of Carew, abound in precisely similar things; and that they are to be met with, plentifully, in the polished pages of Moore and of Béranger, who introduce them with thought and retain them after mature deliberation.

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Morris is, very decidedly, our best writer of songs, and, in saying this, I mean to assign him a high rank as poet. For my own part, I would much rather have written the best song of a nation than its noblest epic. One or two of Hoffman's songs have merit, but they are sad echoes of Moore, and even if this were not so (everybody knows that it is so) they are totally deficient in the real song-essence. *Woodman, Spare that Tree*, and *By the Lake where Droops the Willow* are compositions of which any poet, living or dead, might justly be proud. By these, if by nothing else, Morris is immortal. It is quite impossible to put down such things by sneers. The affectation of contemning them is of no avail, unless to render manifest the envy of those who affect the contempt. As mere poems, there are several of Morris' compositions equal, if not superior, to either of those just mentioned, but as songs I much doubt whether these latter have ever been surpassed. In quiet grace and unaffected tenderness, I know no American poem which excels the following:

Where Hudson's wave o'er silvery sands
Winds through the hills afar,
Old Crow-nest like a monarch stands,
Crowned with a single star.
And there, amid the billowy swells
Of rock-ribbed, cloud-capped earth,
My fair and gentle Ida dwells,
A nymph of mountain birth.

George P. Morris

The snow-flake that the cliff receives,
The diamonds of the showers,
Spring's tender blossoms, buds and leaves,
The sisterhood of flowers,
Morn's early beam, eve's balmy breeze,
Her purity define;
But Ida's dearer far than these
To this fond breast of mine.

My heart is on the hills; the shades
Of night are on my brow.
Ye pleasant haunts and silent glades,
My soul is with you now.
I bless the star-crowned Highlands where
My Ida's footsteps roam:
Oh, for a falcon's wing to bear—
To bear me to my home.





Fancy and Imagination

DRAKE'S "CULPRIT FAY" AND MOORE'S
"ALCIPHRON" ¹



MID the vague mythology of Egypt, the voluptuous scenery of her Nile, and the gigantic mysteries of her pyramids, Anacreon Moore has found all of that striking material which he so much delights in working up, and which he has embodied in the poem before us. The design of the story (for plot it has none) has been a less consideration than its facilities, and is made subservient to its execution. The subject is comprised in five epistles. In the first, Alciphron, the head of the Epicurean sect at Athens, writes from Alexandria to his friend Cleon, in the former city. He tells him (assigning a reason for quitting Athens and her pleasures) that, having fallen

¹ *Alciphron*, a Poem. By Thomas Moore, Esq., author of *Lalla Rookh*, etc. Carey & Hart, Philadelphia.

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asleep one night after protracted festivity, he beholds, in a dream, a spectre, who tells him that beside the sacred Nile, he, the Epicurean, shall find that Eternal Life for which he had so long been sighing. In the second, from the same to the same, the traveller speaks at large and in rapturous terms, of the scenery of Egypt, of the beauty of her maidens, of an approaching Festival of the Moon, and of a wild hope entertained that amid the subterraneous chambers of some huge pyramid lies the secret which he covets, the secret of Life Eternal. In the third letter, he relates a love adventure at the Festival. Fascinated by the charms of one of the nymphs of a procession, he is first in despair at losing sight of her, then overjoyed at again seeing her in Necropolis, and finally traces her steps until they are lost near one of the smaller pyramids. In epistle the fourth (still from the same to the same), he enters and explores the pyramid, and, passing through a complete series of Eleusinian mysteries, is at length successfully initiated into the secrets of Memphian priestcraft, we learning this latter point from letter the fifth, which concludes the poem, and is addressed by Orcus, high-priest of Memphis, to Decius, a prætorian prefect.

A new poem from Moore calls to mind that critical opinion respecting him which had its origin, we believe, in the dogmatism of Coleridge—we mean the opinion that he is essentially the poet of fancy, the

term being employed in contradistinction to imagination. "The fancy," says the author of *The Ancient Mariner*, in his *Biographia Literaria*, "the fancy combines, the imagination creates." And this was intended, and has been received, as a distinction. If so at all, it is one without a difference; without even a difference of degree. The fancy as nearly creates as the imagination; and neither creates in any respect. All novel conceptions are merely unusual combinations. The mind of man can imagine nothing which has not really existed; and this point is susceptible of the most positive demonstration—see the Baron de Bielfield, in his *Premiers Traits de l'Érudition Universelle*, 1767. It will be said, perhaps, that we can imagine a griffin, and that a griffin does not exist. Not the griffin, certainly, but its component parts. It is a mere compendium of known limbs and features, of known qualities. Thus with all which seems to be new, which appears to be a creation of intellect, it is resolvable into the old. The wildest and most vigorous effort of mind cannot stand the test of this analysis.

We might make a distinction, of degree, between the fancy and the imagination, in saying that the latter is the former loftily employed. But experience proves this distinction to be unsatisfactory. What we feel and know to be fancy will be found still only fanciful, whatever be the theme which engages it. It retains its idiosyncrasy under all circumstances. No subject

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exalts it into the ideal. We might exemplify this by reference to the writings of one whom our patriotism, rather than our judgment, has elevated to a niche in the poetic temple which he does not becomingly fill, and which he cannot long uninterruptedly hold. We allude to the late Dr. Rodman Drake, whose puerile abortion, *The Culprit Fay*, we examined at some length in a critique elsewhere, proving it, we think, beyond all question, to belong to that class of the pseudo-ideal, in dealing with which we find ourselves embarrassed between a kind of half-consciousness that we ought to admire, and the certainty that we do not. Dr. Drake was employed upon a good subject, at least it is a subject precisely identical with those which Shakespeare was wont so happily to treat, and in which, especially, the author of *Lilian* has so wonderfully succeeded. But the American has brought to his task a mere fancy, and has grossly failed in doing what many suppose him to have done—in writing an ideal or imaginative poem. There is not one particle of the true *ποίησις* about *The Culprit Fay*. We say that the subject, even at its best points, did not aid Dr. Drake in the slightest degree. He was never more than fanciful. The passage, for example, chiefly cited by his admirers, is the account of the “Sylphid Queen”; and to show the difference between the false and the true ideal, we collated, in the review just alluded to, this, the most admired passage, with one upon a similar topic by Shelley. We shall

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be pardoned for repeating here, as nearly as we remember them, some words of what we then said.

The description of the Sylphid Queen runs thus:

But oh, how fair the shape that lay
Beneath a rainbow bending bright;
She seemed to the entrancéd fay,
The loveliest of the forms of light;
Her mantle was the purple rolled
At twilight in the west afar;
'T was tied with threads of dawning gold,
And buttoned with a sparkling star.
Her face was like the lily roon
That veils the vestal planet's hue;
Her eyes two beamlets from the moon
Set floating in the welkin blue.
Her hair is like the sunny beam,
And the diamond gems which round it gleam
Are the pure drops of dewy even
That ne'er have left their native heaven.

In the *Queen Mab* of Shelley, a fairy is thus introduced:

Those who had looked upon the sight,
Passing all human glory,
Saw not the yellow moon,
Saw not the mortal scene,
Heard not the night-wind's rush,
Heard not an earthly sound,
Saw but the fairy pageant,
Heard but the heavenly strains
That filled the lonely dwelling—

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And thus described:

The fairy's frame was slight; yon fibrous cloud
That catches but the palest tinge of even,
And which the straining eye can hardly seize
When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,
Were scarce so thin, so slight; but the fair star
That gems the glittering coronet of morn,
Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,
As that which, bursting from the fairy's form,
Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,
Yet with an undulating motion,
Swayed to her outline gracefully.

In these exquisite lines the faculty of mere comparison is but little exercised; that of ideality, in a wonderful degree. It is probable that in a similar case Dr. Drake would have formed the face of the fairy of the "fibrous cloud," her arms of the "pale tinge of even," her eyes of the "fair stars," and her body of the "twilight shadow." Having so done, his admirers would have congratulated him upon his imagination, not taking the trouble to think that they themselves could at any moment imagine a fairy of materials equally as good, and conveying an equally distinct idea. Their mistake would be precisely analogous to that of many a schoolboy who admires the imagination displayed in *Jack the Giant-Killer*, and is finally rejoiced at discovering his own imagination to surpass that of the author, since the monsters destroyed by Jack are only

about forty feet in height, and he himself has no trouble in imagining some of one hundred and forty. It will be seen that the fairy of Shelley is not a mere compound of incongruous natural objects, artificially put together, and unaccompanied by any moral sentiment, but a being, in the illustration of whose nature some physical elements are used collaterally as adjuncts, while the main conception springs immediately, or thus apparently springs, from the brain of the poet, enveloped in the moral sentiments of grace, of color, of motion—of the beautiful, of the mystical, of the august—in short, of the ideal.

The truth is, that the just distinction between the fancy and the imagination (and which is still but a distinction of degree) is involved in the consideration of the mystic. We give this as an idea of our own altogether. We have no authority for our opinion, but do not the less firmly hold it. The term *mystic* is here employed in the sense of Augustus William Schlegel and of most other German critics. It is applied by them to that class of composition in which there lies beneath the transparent upper current of meaning an under or suggestive one. What we vaguely term the moral of any sentiment is its mystic or secondary expression. It has the vast force of an accompaniment in music. This vivifies the air; that spiritualizes the fanciful conception and lifts it into the ideal.

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This theory will bear, we think, the most rigorous tests which can be made applicable to it, and will be acknowledged as tenable by all who are themselves imaginative. If we carefully examine those poems, or portions of poems, or those prose romances, which mankind have been accustomed to designate as "imaginative" (for an instinctive feeling leads us to employ properly the term whose full import we have still never been able to define), it will be seen that all so designated are remarkable for the suggestive character which we have discussed. They are strongly mystic, in the proper sense of the word. We will here only call to the reader's mind the *Prometheus Vinctus* of Æschylus; the *Inferno* of Dante; the *Destruction of Numantia* by Cervantes; the *Comus* of Milton; the *Ancient Mariner*, the *Christabel*, and the *Kubla Khan* of Coleridge; the *Nightingale* of Keats; and, most especially, the *Sensitive Plant* of Shelley, and the *Undine* of De la Motte Fouqué. These two latter poems (for we call them both such) are the finest possible examples of the purely ideal. There is little of fancy here, and everything of imagination. With each note of the lyre is heard a ghostly, and not always a distinct, but an august and soul-exalting, echo. In every glimpse of beauty presented, we catch, through long and wild vistas, dim bewildering visions of a far more ethereal beauty beyond. But not so in poems which the world has always persisted in terming fanciful. Here the

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upper current is often exceedingly brilliant and beautiful; but then men feel that this upper current is all. No Naiad voice addresses them from below. The notes of the air of the song do not tremble with the according tones of the accompaniment.

It is the failure to perceive these truths which has occasioned the embarrassment experienced by our critics while discussing the topic of Moore's station in the poetic world,—that hesitation with which we are obliged to refuse him the loftiest rank among the most noble. The popular voice and the popular heart have denied him that happiest quality, imagination, and here the popular voice (because for once it has gone with the popular heart) is right, but yet only relatively so. Imagination is not the leading feature of the poetry of Moore; but he possesses it in no little degree.

We will quote a few instances from the poem now before us,—instances which will serve to exemplify the distinctive feature which we have attributed to ideality.

It is the suggestive force which exalts and etherealizes the passages we copy:

Or is it that there lurks, indeed,
Some truth in man's prevailing creed,
And that our guardians from on high
 Come, in that pause from toil and sin,
To put the senses' curtain by,
 And on the wakeful soul look in!

Again:

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The eternal pyramids of Memphis burst
Awfully on my sight—standing sublime
'Twixt earth and heaven, the watch-towers of time,
From whose lone summit, when his reign hath past
From earth forever, he will look his last.

And again:

Is there for man no hope, but this which dooms
His only lasting trophies to be tombs!
But 't is not so; earth, heaven, all nature shows
He may become immortal, may unclose
The wings within him wrapt, and proudly rise
Redeemed from earth, a creature of the skies!

And here:

The pyramid shadows, stretching from the light,
Look like the first colossal steps of night,
Stalking across the valley to invade
The distant hills of porphyry with their shade!

And once more:

There Silence, thoughtful god, who loves
The neighborhood of death, in groves
Of asphodel lies hid, and weaves
His hushing spell among the leaves.

Such lines as these, we must admit, however, are not of frequent occurrence in the poem, the sum of whose great beauty is composed of the several sums of a world of minor excellences.

Moore has always been renowned for the number

and appositeness, as well as novelty, of his similes; and the renown thus acquired is strongly indicial of his deficiency in that nobler merit, the noblest of them all. No poet thus distinguished was ever richly ideal. Pope and Cowper are remarkable instances in point. Similes (so much insisted upon by the critics of the reign of Queen Anne) are never, in our opinion, strictly in good taste, whatever may be said to the contrary, and certainly can never be made to accord with other high qualities, except when naturally arising from the subject in the way of illustration, and, when thus arising, they have seldom the merit of novelty. To be novel, they must fail in essential particulars. The higher minds will avoid their frequent use. They form no portion of the ideal, and appertain to the fancy alone.

We proceed with a few random observations upon *Alciphron*. The poem is distinguished throughout by a very happy facility which has never been mentioned in connection with its author, but which has much to do with the reputation he has obtained. We allude to the facility with which he recounts a poetical story in a prosaic way. By this is meant that he preserves the tone and method of arrangement of a prose relation, and thus obtains great advantages over his more stilted compeers. His is no poetical style (such, for example, as the French have—a distinct style for a distinct purpose), but an easy and ordinary prose manner, ornamented into poetry. By means of this he is en-

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abled to enter with ease into details which would baffle any other versifier of the age, and at which Lamartine would stand aghast. For anything that we see to the contrary, Moore might solve a cubic equation in verse. His facility in this respect is truly admirable, and is, no doubt, the result of long practice after mature deliberation. We refer the reader to page 50 of the pamphlet now reviewed, where the minute and conflicting incidents of the descent into the pyramid are detailed with absolutely more precision than we have ever known a similar relation detailed with in prose.

In general dexterity and melody of versification the author of *Lalla Rookh* is unrivalled; but he is by no means at all times accurate, falling occasionally into the common foible of throwing accent upon syllables too unimportant to sustain it. Thus, in the lines which follow, where we have italicized the weak syllables:

And mark 't is nigh; already *the sun bids*. . . .
While hark from all the temples a rich swell. . . .
I rushed into the cool night air.

He also too frequently draws out the word *heaven* into two syllables, a protraction which it never will support.

His English is now and then objectionable, as, at page 26, where he speaks of

Lighted barks
That down Syene's cataract shoots,

making "shoots" rhyme with "flutes," below; also, at page 6, and elsewhere, where the word "none" has improperly a singular instead of a plural force. But such criticism as this is somewhat captious, for in general he is most highly polished.

At page 27 he has stolen his "woven snow" from the *ventum textilem* of Apuleius.

At page 8 he either himself has misunderstood the tenets of Epicurus, or wilfully misrepresents them through the voice of Alciphron. We incline to the former idea, however, as the philosophy of that most noble of the sophists is habitually perverted by the moderns. Nothing could be more spiritual and less sensual than the doctrines we so torture into wrong. But we have drawn out this notice at somewhat too great length and must conclude. In truth, the exceeding beauty of *Alciphron* has bewildered and detained us. We could not point out a poem in any language which, as a whole, greatly excels it. It is far superior to *Lalla Rookh*. While Moore does not reach, except in rare snatches, the height of the loftiest qualities of some whom we have named, yet he has written finer poems than any, of equal length, by the greatest of his rivals. His radiance, not always as bright as some flashes from other pens, is yet a radiance of equable glow, whose total amount of light exceeds, by very much, we think, that total amount in the case of any contemporary writer whatsoever. A vivid fancy, an

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epigrammatic spirit, a fine taste, vivacity, dexterity, and a musical ear, have made him very easily what he is, the most popular poet now living, if not the most popular that ever lived; and, perhaps, a slight modification at birth of that which phrenologists have agreed to term "temperament" might have made him the truest and noblest votary of the Muse of any age or clime. As it is, we have only casual glimpses of that *mens divinior* which is assuredly enshrined within him.





Thomas Babington Macaulay¹

MACAULAY has obtained a reputation which, although deservedly great, is yet in a remarkable measure undeserved. The few who regard him merely as a terse, forcible, and logical writer, full of thought, and abounding in original views, often sagacious and never otherwise than admirably expressed, appear to us precisely in the right. The many who look upon him as not only all this, but as a comprehensive and profound thinker, little prone to error, err essentially themselves. The source of the general mistake lies in a very singular consideration, yet in one upon which we do not remember ever to have heard a word of comment. We allude to a tendency in the public mind toward logic for logic's sake, a liability to confound the vehicle with the conveyed, an aptitude to be so dazzled by the luminousness with which an idea is set forth, as to mistake it for the luminousness of the idea itself. The error is one ex-

¹ *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays.* By T. Babington Macaulay. Carey & Hart, Philadelphia.

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actly analogous with that which leads the immature poet to think himself sublime wherever he is obscure, because obscurity is a source of the sublime, thus confounding obscurity of expression with the expression of obscurity. In the case of Macaulay,—and, we may say, *en passant*, of our own Channing,—we assent to what he says, too often because we so very clearly understand what it is that he intends to say. Comprehending vividly the points and the sequence of his argument, we fancy that we are concurring in the argument itself. It is not every mind which is at once able to analyze the satisfaction it receives from such essays as we see here. If it were merely beauty of style for which they were distinguished, if they were remarkable only for rhetorical flourishes, we would not be apt to estimate these flourishes at more than their due value. We would not agree with the doctrines of the essayist on account of the elegance with which they were urged. On the contrary, we would be inclined to disbelief. But when all ornament save that of simplicity is disclaimed; when we are attacked by precision of language, by perfect accuracy of expression, by directness and singleness of thought, and above all by a logic the most rigorously close and consequential, it is hardly a matter for wonder that nine of us out of ten are content to rest in the gratification thus received as in the gratification of absolute truth.

Of the terseness and simple vigor of Macaulay's

style it is unnecessary to point out instances. Every one will acknowledge his merits on this score. His exceeding closeness of logic, however, is more especially remarkable. With this he suffers nothing to interfere. Here, for example, is a sentence in which, to preserve entire the chain of his argument, to leave no minute gap which the reader might have to fill up with thought, he runs into most unusual tautology:

"The books and traditions of a sect may contain, mingled with propositions strictly theological, other propositions, purporting to rest on the same authority, which relate to physics. If new discoveries should throw discredit on the physical propositions, the theological propositions, unless they can be separated from the physical propositions, will share in their discredit."

These things are very well in their way; but it is indeed questionable whether they do not appertain rather to the trickery of thought's vehicle than to thought itself, rather to reason's shadow than to reason. Truth, for truth's sake, is seldom so enforced. It is scarcely too much to say that the style of the profound thinker is never closely logical. Here we might instance George Combe, than whom a more candid reasoner never, perhaps, wrote or spoke, than whom a more complete antipode to Babington Macaulay there certainly never existed. The former reasons to discover the true. The latter argues to convince the world, and,

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in arguing, not unfrequently surprises himself into conviction. What Combe appears to Macaulay it would be a difficult thing to say. What Macaulay is thought of by Combe we can understand very well. The man who looks at an argument in its details alone will not fail to be misled by the one; while he who keeps steadily in view the generality of a thesis will always at least approximate the truth under guidance of the other.

Macaulay's tendency, and the tendency of mere logic in general, to concentrate force upon minutiae, at the expense of a subject as a whole, is well instanced in an article (in the volume now before us), on Ranke's *History of the Popes*. This article is called a review, possibly because it is anything else, as *lucus* is *lucus a non lucendo*. In fact, it is nothing more than a beautifully written treatise on the main theme of Ranke himself; the whole matter of the treatise being deduced from the *History*. In the way of criticism there is nothing worth the name. The strength of the essayist is put forth to account for the progress of Romanism by maintaining that divinity is not a progressive science. The enigmas, says he in substance, which perplex the natural theologian are the same in all ages, while the Bible, where alone we are to seek revealed truth, has always been what it is.

The manner in which these two propositions are set forth is a model for the logician and for the student of

belles lettres, yet the error into which the essayist has rushed headlong is egregious. He attempts to deceive his readers, or has deceived himself, by confounding the nature of that proof from which we reason of the concerns of earth, considered as man's habitation, and the nature of that evidence from which we reason of the same earth regarded as a unit of that vast whole, the universe. In the former case, the data being palpable, the proof is direct; in the latter, it is purely analogical. Were the indications we derive from science, of the nature and designs of Deity, and thence, by inference, of man's destiny,—were these indications proof direct, no advance in science would strengthen them; for, as our author truly observes, "nothing could be added to the force of the argument which the mind finds in every beast, bird, or flower"; but, as these indications are rigidly analogical, every step in human knowledge, every astronomical discovery, for instance, throws additional light upon the august subject, by extending the range of analogy. That we know no more to-day of the nature of Deity, of its purposes, and thus of man himself, than we did even a dozen years ago, is a proposition disgracefully absurd; and of this any astronomer could assure Mr. Macaulay. Indeed, to our own mind, the only irrefutable argument in support of the soul's immortality, or, rather, the only conclusive proof of man's alternate dissolution and rejuvenescence *ad infinitum*, is to be found

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in analogies deduced from the modern established theory of the nebular cosmogony.¹ Mr. Macaulay, in short, has forgotten that he frequently forgets, or neglects, the very gist of his subject. He has forgotten that analogical evidence cannot, at all times, be discoursed of as if identical with proof direct. Throughout the whole of his treatise he has made no distinction whatever.

¹ This cosmogony demonstrates that all existing bodies in the universe are formed of a nebular matter, a rare ethereal medium, pervading space, shows the mode and laws of formation, and proves that all things are in a perpetual state of progress, that nothing in nature is perfected.





Seba Smith

WHAT few notices we have seen of this poem¹ speak of it as the production of *Mrs.* Seba Smith. To be sure, gentlemen may be behind the scenes, and know more about the matter than we do. They may have some private reason for understanding that black is white, some reason into which we, personally, are not initiated. But, to ordinary perception, *Powhatan* is the composition of Seba Smith, Esquire, of Jack Downing memory, and not of his wife. Seba Smith is the name upon the title-page; and the personal pronoun which supplies the place of this well-known prænomen and cognomen in the preface is, we are constrained to say, of the masculine gender. “The author of *Powhatan*,”—thus, for example, runs a portion of the prolegomena—“does not presume to claim for *his* production the merit of

¹ *Powhatan: a Metrical Romance in Seven Cantos.* By Seba Smith. New York: Harper & Brothers.

good and genuine poetry, nor does *he* pretend to assign it a place in the classes or forms into which poetry is divided"—in all of which, by the way, he is decidedly right. But can it be that no gentleman has read even so far as the preface of the book? Can it be that the critics have had no curiosity to creep into the *adyta*, into the inner mysteries of this temple? If so, they are decidedly right, too.

Powhatan is handsomely bound. Its printing is clear beyond comparison. Its paper is magnificent, and we undertake to say (for *we have* read it through with the greatest attention) that there is not a single typographical error in it from one end to the other. Further than this, in the way of commendation, no man with both brains and conscience should proceed. In truth, a more absurdly flat affair, for flat is the only epithet which applies in this case, was never before paraded to the world with so grotesque an air of bombast and assumption.

To give some idea of the *tout ensemble* of the book, we have, first, a dedication to the "Young People of the United States," in which Mr. Jack Downing lives, in "the hope that he may do some good in his day and generation, by adding something to the sources of rational enjoyment and mental culture." Next, we have a preface, occupying four pages, in which, quoting his publishers, the author tells us that poetry is a "very great bore and won't sell," a thing which cannot be

denied in certain cases, but which Mr. Downing denies in his own. "It may be true," he says, "of endless masses of words, that are poured forth from the press under the name of poetry," but it is not true "of genuine poetry, of that which is worthy of the name"; in short, we presume, he means to say it is not in the least little bit true of *Powhatan*, with regard to whose merits he wishes to be tried, not by the critics (we fear, in fact, that here it is the critics who will be tried), but "by the common taste of common readers," all which ideas are common enough, to say no more.

We have next a "Sketch of the Character of Powhatan," which is exceedingly interesting and commendable, and which is taken from Burk's *History of Virginia*,—four pages more. Then comes a Proem, four pages more,—forty-eight lines, twelve lines to a page,—in which all that we can understand is something about the name of "Powhatan"

Descending to a distant age,
Embodied forth on the deathless page

of the author, that is to say, of Jack Downing, Esquire. We have now, one after the other, CANTOS one, two, three, four, five, six, and seven, each subdivided into PARTS by means of Roman numerals, some of these PARTS comprehending as many as six lines, upon the principle, we presume, of packing up precious com-

modities in small bundles. The volume then winds up with NOTES, in proportion of three to one as regards the amount of text, and taken, the most of them, from Burk's *Virginia*, as before.

It is very difficult to keep one's countenance when reviewing such a work as this; but we will do our best, for the truth's sake, and put on as serious a face as the case will admit.

The leading fault of *Powhatan*, then, is precisely what its author supposes to be its principal merit. "It would be difficult," he says, in that pitiable preface, in which he has so exposed himself, "to find a poem that embodies more truly the spirit of history, or indeed that follows out more faithfully many of its details." It would, indeed; and we are very sorry to say it. The truth is, Mr. Downing has never dreamed of any artistic arrangement of his facts. He has gone straight forward, like a blind horse, and turned neither to the one side nor to the other, for fear of stumbling. But he gets them all in, every one of them—the facts, we mean. Powhatan never did anything in his life, we are sure, that Mr. Downing has not got in his poem. He begins at the beginning and goes on steadily to the end, painting away at his story, just like a sign-painter at a sign, beginning at the left-hand side of his board and plastering through to the right. But he has omitted one very ingenious trick of the sign-painter. He has forgotten to write under his portrait, "This is a

pig," and thus there is some danger of mistaking it for an opossum.

But we are growing scurrilous, in spite of our promise, and must put on a sober visage once more. It is a hard thing, however, when we have to read and write about such doggerel as this:

But bravely to the river's brink,
I led my warrior train,
And face to face, each glance they sent,
We sent it back again.
Their werowance looked stern at me,
And I looked stern at him,
And all my warriors clasped their bows,
And nerved each heart and limb.
I raised my heavy war-club high,
And swung it fiercely round,
And shook it toward the shallop's side,
Then laid it on the ground.
And then the lighted calumet
I offered to their view,
And thrice I drew the sacred smoke,
And toward the shallop blew,
And as the curling vapor rose,
Soft as a spirit prayer,
I saw the pale-face leader wave
A white flag in the air.
Then launching out their painted skiff
They boldly came to land,
And spoke us many a kindly word,
And took us by the hand,
Presenting rich and shining gifts,

Seba Smith

Of copper, brass, and beads,
To show that they were men like us,
And prone to generous deeds.
We held a long and friendly talk,
Inquiring whence they came,
And who the leader of their band,
And what their country's name,
And how their mighty shallop moved
Across the boundless sea,
And why they touched our great king's land
Without his liberty.

It won't do. We cannot sing to this tune any longer. We greatly prefer,

John Gilpin was a gentleman
Of credit and renown,
A train-band captain eke was he
Of famous London town.

Or:

Old Grimes is dead, that good old man,
We ne'er shall see him more,
He used to wear an overcoat
All buttoned down before,

or lines to that effect; we wish we could remember the words. The part, however, about

Their werowance look'd stern at me,
And I looked stern at him,

is not quite original with Mr. Downing—is it? We merely ask for information. Have we not heard something about

An old crow sitting on a hickory limb,
Who winked at me, and I winked at him ?

The simple truth is, that Mr. Downing never committed a greater mistake in his life than when he fancied himself a poet, even in the ninety-ninth degree. We doubt whether he could distinctly state the difference between an epic and an epigram. And it will not do for him to appeal from the critic to common readers, because we assure him his book is a very uncommon book. We never saw any one so uncommonly bad, nor one about whose parturition so uncommon a fuss has been made, so little to the satisfaction of common sense. Your poem is a curiosity, Mr. Jack Downing; your *Metrical Romance* is not worth a single half sheet of the pasteboard upon which it is printed. This is our humble and honest opinion; and, although honest opinions are not very plentiful just now, you can have ours at what it is worth. But we wish, before parting, to ask you one question. What do you mean by that motto from Sir Philip Sidney upon the title-page: "He cometh to you with a tale that holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner"? What do you mean by it, we say? Either you cannot intend to apply it to the "tale" of *Powhatan*, or else all the "old men" in your particular neighborhood must be very old men; and all the "little children" a set of dunderheaded little ignoramuses.



The Quacks of Helicon—A Satire¹



SATIRE, professedly such, at the present day, and especially by an American writer, is a welcome novelty, indeed. We have really done very little in the line upon this side of the Atlantic, nothing certainly of importance, Trumbull's clumsy poem and Halleck's *Croakers* to the contrary notwithstanding. Some things we have produced, to be sure, which were excellent in the way of burlesque, without intending a syllable that was not utterly solemn and serious. Odes, ballads, songs, sonnets, epics, and epigrams, possessed of this unintentional excellence, we could have no difficulty in designating by the dozen; but in the matter of directly-meant and genuine satire, it cannot be denied that we are sadly

¹ By L. A. Wilmer.

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deficient. Although, as a literary people, however, we are not exactly Archilocuses, although we have no pretensions to the *ηχέντες ταυβοι*, although, in short, we are no satirists ourselves, there can be no question that we answer sufficiently well as subjects for satire.

We repeat that we are glad to see this book of Mr. Wilmer's; first, because it is something new under the sun; secondly, because, in many respects, it is well executed; and thirdly, because in the universal corruption and rigmarole amid which we gasp for breath it is really a pleasant thing to get even one accidental whiff of the unadulterated air of truth.

The *Quacks of Helicon*, as a poem and otherwise, has many defects, and these we shall have no scruple in pointing out, although Mr. Wilmer is a personal friend of our own, and we are happy and proud to say so; but it has also many remarkable merits,—merits which it will be quite useless for those aggrieved by the satire, quite useless for any clique or set of cliques, to attempt to frown down, or to affect not to see, or to feel, or to understand.

Its prevalent blemishes are referable chiefly to the leading sin of imitation. Had the work been composed professedly in paraphrase of the whole manner of the sarcastic epistles of the times of Dryden and Pope, we should have pronounced it the most ingenuous and truthful thing of the kind upon record. So close is the copy that it extends to the most trivial

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points; for example, to the old forms of punctuation. The turns of phraseology, the tricks of rhythm, the arrangement of the paragraphs, the general conduct of the satire—everything, all—are Dryden's. We cannot deny, it is true, that the satiric model of the days in question is insusceptible of improvement, and that the modern author who deviates therefrom must necessarily sacrifice something of merit at the shrine of originality. Neither can we shut our eyes to the fact that the imitation in the present case has conveyed, in full spirit, the higher qualities, as well as in rigid letter the minor elegances and general peculiarities of the author of *Absalom and Achitophel*. We have here the bold, vigorous, and sonorous verse, the biting sarcasm, the pungent epigrammatism, the unscrupulous directness as of old. Yet it will not do to forget that Mr. Wilmer has been shown how to accomplish these things. He is thus only entitled to the praise of a close observer and of a thoughtful and skilful copyist. The images are, to be sure, his own. They are neither Pope's, nor Dryden's, nor Rochester's, nor Churchill's, but they are moulded in the identical mould used by these satirists.

This servility of imitation has seduced our author into errors which his better sense should have avoided. He sometimes mistakes intentions; at other times he copies faults, confounding them with beauties. In the opening of the poem, for example, we find the lines:

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Against usurpers, Olney, I declare
A righteous, just, and patriotic war.

The rhymes "war" and "declare" are here adopted from Pope, who employs them frequently; but it should have been remembered that the modern relative pronunciation of the two words differs materially from the relative pronunciation of the era of the *Dunciad*.

We are also sure that the gross obscenity, the filth—we can use no gentler name—which disgraces the *Quacks of Helicon*, cannot be the result of innate impurity in the mind of the writer. It is but a part of the slavish and indiscriminating imitation of the Swift and Rochester school. It has done the book an irreparable injury, both in a moral and pecuniary view, without effecting anything whatever on the score of sarcasm, vigor, or wit. "Let what is to be said, be said plainly." True; but let nothing vulgar be ever said or conceived.

In asserting that this satire, even in its mannerisms, has imbued itself with the full spirit of the polish and of the pungency of Dryden, we have already awarded it high praise. But there remains to be mentioned the far loftier merit of speaking fearlessly the truth, at an epoch when truth is out of fashion, and under circumstances of social position which would have deterred almost any man in our community from a similar quixotism. For the publication of the *Quacks of Helicon*, a poem which brings under review, by name,

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most of our prominent *literati*, and treats them, generally, as they deserve (what treatment could be more bitter?)—for the publication of this attack, Mr. Wilmer, whose subsistence lies in his pen, has little to look for, apart from the silent respect of those at once honest and timid, but the most malignant open or covert persecution. For this reason, and because it is the truth which he has spoken, do we say to him, from the bottom of our hearts, “God speed!”

We repeat it: it is the truth which he has spoken; and who shall contradict us? He has said unscrupulously what every reasonable man among us has long known to be “as true as the Pentateuch”—that, as a literary people, we are one vast perambulating humbug. He has asserted that we are clique-ridden; and who does not smile at the obvious truism of that assertion? He maintains that chicanery is, with us, a far surer road than talent to distinction in letters. Who gainsays this? The corrupt nature of our ordinary criticism has become notorious. Its powers have been prostrated by its own arm. The intercourse between critic and publisher, as it now almost universally stands, is comprised either in the paying and pocketing of blackmail, as the price of a simple forbearance, or in a direct system of petty and contemptible bribery, properly so called, a system even more injurious than the former to the true interests of the public, and more degrading to the buyers and sellers of good opinion,

on account of the more positive character of the service here rendered for the consideration received. We laugh at the idea of any denial of our assertions upon this topic; they are infamously true. In the charge of general corruption there are undoubtedly many noble exceptions to be made. There are, indeed, some very few editors who, maintaining an entire independence, will receive no books from publishers at all, or who receive them with a perfect understanding, on the part of these latter, that an unbiassed critique will be given. But these cases are insufficient to have much effect on the popular mistrust—a mistrust heightened by late exposures of the machinations of coteries in New York, coteries which, at the bidding of leading booksellers, manufacture, as required from time to time, a pseudo-public opinion by wholesale, for the benefit of any little hanger-on of the party, or pettifogging protector of the firm.

We speak of these things in the bitterness of scorn. It is unnecessary to cite instances, where one is found in almost every issue of a book. It is needless to call to mind the desperate case of Fay—a case where the pertinacity of the effort to gull, where the obviousness of the attempt at forestalling a judgment, where the wofully over-done be-mirrorment of that man-of-straw, together with the pitiable platitude of his production, proved a dose somewhat too potent for even the well-prepared stomach of the mob. We say it is

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supererogatory to dwell upon "Norman Leslie," or other by-gone follies, when we have, before our eyes, hourly instances of the machinations in question. To so great an extent of methodical assurance has the system of puffery arrived, that publishers of late have made no scruple of keeping on hand an assortment of commendatory notices, prepared by their men of all work, and of sending these notices around to the multitudinous papers within their influence, done up within the fly-leaves of the book. The grossness of these base attempts, however, has not escaped indignant rebuke from the more honorable portion of the press; and we hail these symptoms of restiveness under the yoke of unprincipled ignorance and quackery (strong only in combination) as the harbinger of a better era for the interests of real merit, and of the national literature as a whole.

It has become, indeed, the plain duty of each individual connected with our periodicals heartily to give whatever influence he possesses to the good cause of integrity and the truth. The results thus attainable will be found worthy his closest attention and best efforts. We shall thus frown down all conspiracies to foist inanity upon the public consideration at the obvious expense of every man of talent who is not a member of a clique in power. We may even arrive, in time, at that desirable point from which a distinct view of our men of letters may be obtained and their

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respective pretensions adjusted, by the standard of a rigorous and self-sustaining criticism alone. That their several positions are as yet properly settled, that the posts which a vast number of them now hold are maintained by any better tenure than that of the chicanery upon which we have commented, will be asserted by none but the ignorant, or the parties who have best right to feel an interest in the "good old condition of things." No two matters can be more radically different than the reputation of some of our prominent *littérateurs* as gathered from the mouths of the people (who glean it from the paragraphs of the papers), and the same reputation as deduced from the private estimate of intelligent and educated men. We do not advance this fact as a new discovery. Its truth, on the contrary, is the subject, and has long been so, of everyday witticism and mirth.

Why not? Surely there can be few things more ridiculous than the general character and assumptions of the ordinary critical notices of new books! An editor, sometimes without the shadow of the commonest attainment, often without brains, always without time, does not scruple to give the world to understand that he is in the daily habit of critically reading and deciding upon a flood of publications, one tenth of whose title-pages he may possibly have turned over, three fourths of whose contents would be Hebrew to his most desperate efforts at comprehension, and whose

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entire mass and amount, as might be mathematically demonstrated, would be sufficient to occupy, in the most cursory perusal, the attention of some ten or twenty readers for a month! What he wants in plausibility, however, he makes up in obsequiousness; what he lacks in time he supplies in temper. He is the most easily pleased man in the world. He admires everything, from the big Dictionary of Noah Webster to the last diamond edition of Tom Thumb. Indeed, his sole difficulty is in finding tongue to express his delight. Every pamphlet is a miracle, every book in boards is an epoch in letters. His phrases, therefore, get bigger and bigger every day, and, if it were not for talking Cockney, we might call him a "regular swell."

Yet, in the attempt at getting definite information in regard to any one portion of our literature, the merely general reader, or the foreigner, will turn in vain from the lighter to the heavier journals. But it is not our intention here to dwell upon the radical, antique, and systematized rigmarole of our Quarterlies. The articles here are anonymous. Who writes?—who causes to be written? Who but an ass will put faith in tirades which may be the result of personal hostility, or in panegyrics which nine times out of ten may be laid, directly or indirectly, to the charge of the author himself? It is in the favor of these saturnine pamphlets that they contain, now and then, a good essay *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*, which may be

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looked into, without decided somnolent consequences, at any period, not immediately subsequent to dinner. But it is useless to expect criticism from periodicals called "Reviews" from never reviewing. Besides, all men know, or should know, that these books are sadly given to verbiage. It is a part of their nature, a condition of their being, a point of their faith. A veteran reviewer loves the safety of generalities, and is, therefore, rarely particular. "Words, words, words," are the secret of his strength. He has one or two ideas of his own, and is both wary and fussy in giving them out. His wit lies with his truth, in a well, and there is always a world of trouble in getting it up. He is a sworn enemy to all things simple and direct. He gives no ear to the advice of the giant Moulineau, "Belier, mon ami, commencez au commencement." He either jumps at once into the middle of his subject, or breaks in at a back door, or sidles up to it with the gait of a crab. No other mode of approach has an air of sufficient profundity. When fairly into it, however, he becomes dazzled with the scintillations of his own wisdom, and is seldom able to see his way out. Tired of laughing at his antics, or frightened at seeing him flounder, the reader at length shuts him up with the book. "What song the Sirens sang," says Sir Thomas Browne, "or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, though puzzling questions, are not beyond *all* conjecture ;" but it would puzzle

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Sir Thomas, backed by Achilles and all the sirens in heathendom, to say, in nine cases out of ten, what is the object of a thorough-going Quarterly Reviewer.

Should the opinions promulgated by our press at large be taken, in their wonderful aggregate, as an evidence of what American literature absolutely is (and it may be said that, in general, they are really so taken), we shall find ourselves the most enviable set of people upon the face of the earth. Our fine writers are legion. Our very atmosphere is redolent of genius, and we, the nation, are a huge, well-contented chameleon, grown pursy by inhaling it. We are *teretes et rotundi*, enwrapped in excellence. All our poets are Miltos, neither mute nor inglorious; all our poetesses are "American Hemanses"; nor will it do to deny that all our novelists are great Knowns or great Unknowns, and that everybody who writes, in every possible and impossible department, is the Admirable Crichton, or, at least, the Admirable Crichton's ghost. We are thus in a glorious condition, and will remain so until forced to disgorge our ethereal honors. In truth, there is some danger that the jealousy of the Old World will interfere. It cannot long submit to that outrageous monopoly of "all the decency and all the talent" in which the gentlemen of the press give such undoubted assurance of our being so busily engaged.

But we feel angry with ourselves for the jesting tone

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of our observations upon this topic. The prevalence of the spirit of puffery is a subject far less for merriment than for disgust. Its truckling, yet dogmatical character, its bold, unsustained, yet self-sufficient and wholesale laudation, is becoming more and more an insult to the common sense of the community. Trivial as it essentially is, it has yet been made the instrument of the grossest abuse in the elevation of imbecility, to the manifest injury, to the utter ruin, of true merit. Is there any man of good feeling and of ordinary understanding, is there one single individual among all our readers, who does not feel a thrill of bitter indignation, apart from any sentiment of mirth, as he calls to mind instance after instance of the purest, of the most unadulterated quackery in letters, which has risen to a high post in the apparent popular estimation, and which still maintains it, by the sole means of a blustering arrogance, or of a busy wriggling conceit, or of the most barefaced plagiarism, or even through the simple immensity of its assumptions—assumptions not only unopposed by the press at large but absolutely supported in proportion to the vociferous clamor with which they are made, in exact accordance with their utter baselessness and untenability? We should have no trouble in pointing out, to-day, some twenty or thirty so-called literary personages, who, if not idiots, as we half think them, or if not hardened to all sense of shame by a long course of disingenuousness, will

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now blush, in the perusal of these words, through consciousness of the shadowy nature of that purchased pedestal upon which they stand, will now tremble in thinking of the feebleness of the breath which will be adequate to the blowing it from beneath their feet. With the help of a hearty good-will, even we may yet tumble them down.

So firm, through a long endurance, has been the hold taken upon the popular mind (at least, so far as we may consider the popular mind reflected in ephemeral letters) by the laudatory system which we have deprecated, that what is, in its own essence, a vice, has become endowed with the appearance, and met with the reception, of a virtue. Antiquity, as usual, has lent a certain degree of speciousness even to the absurd. So continuously have we puffed, that we have, at length, come to think puffing the duty, and plain speaking the dereliction. What we began in gross error, we persist in through habit. Having adopted, in the earlier days of our literature, the untenable idea that this literature, as a whole, could be advanced by an indiscriminate approbation bestowed on its every effort—having adopted this idea, we say, without attention to the obvious fact that praise of all was bitter although negative censure to the few alone deserving, and that the only result of the system, in the fostering way, would be the fostering of folly, we now continue our vile practices through the

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supineness of custom, even while, in our national self-conceit, we repudiate that necessity for patronage and protection in which originated our conduct. In a word, the press, throughout the country, has not been ashamed to make head against the very few bold attempts at independence which have, from time to time, been made in the face of the reigning order of things. And if, in one, or perhaps two, insulated cases, the spirit of severe truth, sustained by an unconquerable will, was not to be put down, then, forthwith, were private chicaneries set in motion; then was had resort, on the part of those who considered themselves injured by the severity of criticism (and who were so, if the just contempt of every ingenuous man is injury)—resort to arts of the most virulent indignity, to untraceable slanders, to ruthless assassination in the dark. We say these things were done, while the press in general looked on, and, with a full understanding of the wrong perpetrated, spoke not against the wrong. The idea had absolutely gone abroad, had grown up little by little into toleration, that attacks, however just, upon a literary reputation, however obtained, however untenable, were well retaliated by the basest and most unfounded traduction of personal fame. But is this an age, is this a day, in which it can be necessary even to advert to such considerations as that the book of the author is the property of the public, and that the issue of the book

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is the throwing down of the gauntlet to the reviewer,—to the reviewer whose duty is the plainest, the duty not even of approbation, or of censure, or of silence, at his own will, but at the sway of those sentiments and of those opinions which are derived from the author himself, through the medium of his written and published words? True criticism is the reflection of the thing criticized upon the spirit of the critic.

But à nos moutons—to the *Quacks of Helicon*. This satire has many faults beside those upon which we have commented. The title, for example, is not sufficiently distinctive, although otherwise good. It does not confine the subject to American quacks, while the work does. The two concluding lines enfeeble instead of strengthening the finale, which would have been exceedingly pungent without them. The individual portions of the thesis are strung together too much at random—a natural sequence is not always preserved—so that, although the lights of the picture are often forcible, the whole has what, in artistical parlance, is termed an accidental and spotty appearance. In truth, the parts of the poem have evidently been composed each by each, as separate themes, and afterward fitted into the general satire, in the best manner possible.

But a more reprehensible sin than any or than all of these is yet to be mentioned—the sin of indiscriminate censure. Even here Mr. Wilmer has erred

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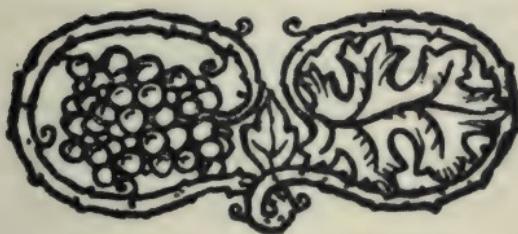
through imitation. He has held in view the sweeping denunciations of the *Dunciad*, and of the later (abortive) satire of Byron. No one in his senses can deny the justice of the general charges of corruption in regard to which we have just spoken from the text of our author. But are there no exceptions? We should, indeed, blush if there were not. And is there no hope? Time will show. We cannot do everything in a day—*Non se gaña Zamora en un ora.* Again, it cannot be gainsaid that the greater number of those who hold high places in our poetical literature are absolute nincompoops, fellows alike innocent of reason and of rhyme. But neither are we all brainless, nor is the devil himself so black as he is painted. Mr. Wilmer must read the chapter in Rabelais's *Gargantua*, "*de ce qu'est signifié par les couleurs blanc et bleu,*" for there is some difference after all. It will not do in a civilized land to run a-muck like a Malay. Mr. Morris has written good songs. Mr. Bryant is not all a fool. Mr. Willis is not quite an ass. Mr. Longfellow will steal, but perhaps he cannot help it (for we have heard of such things), and then it must not be denied that *nil tetigit quod non ornavit.*

The fact is that our author, in the rank exuberance of his zeal, seems to think as little of discrimination as the Bishop of Autun¹ did of the Bible. Poetical

¹ Talleyrand.

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"things in general" are the windmills at which he spurs his Rosinante. He as often tilts at what is true as at what is false; and thus his lines are like the mirrors of the temples of Smyrna, which represent the fairest images as deformed. But the talent, the fearlessness, and especially the design of this book, will suffice to preserve it from that dreadful damnation of "silent contempt," to which editors, throughout the country, if we are not much mistaken, will endeavor, one and all, to consign it.





Frederick Marryat

T has been well said that "the success of certain works may be traced to sympathy between the author's mediocrity of ideas, and mediocrity of ideas on the part of the public." In commenting on this passage, Mrs. Gore, herself a shrewd philosopher, observes that, whether as regards men or books, there exists an excellence too excellent for general favor. To "make a hit," to captivate the public eye, ear, or understanding without a certain degree of merit, is impossible; but the "hardest hit" is seldom made, indeed, we may say never made, by the highest merit. When we wrote the word "seldom" we were thinking of Dickens and *The Old Curiosity Shop*, a work unquestionably of "the highest merit," and which at a first glance appears to have made the most unequivocal of "hits"; but we suddenly remembered that the compositions called *Harry Lorrequer* and *Charles O'Malley* had borne the palm from *The Old Curiosity Shop* in point of what is properly termed popularity.

Frederick Marryat

There can be no question, we think, that the philosophy of all this is to be found in the apothegm with which we began. Marryat is a singular instance of its truth. He has always been a very *popular* writer, in the most rigorous sense of the word. His books are essentially "mediocre." His ideas are the common property of the mob, and have been their common property time out of mind. We look throughout his writings in vain for the slightest indication of originality, for the faintest incentive to thought. His plots, his language, his opinions, are neither adapted nor intended for scrutiny. We must be contented with them as sentiments, rather than as ideas; and properly to estimate them, even in this view, we must bring ourselves into a sort of identification with the sentiment of the mass. Works composed in this spirit are sometimes purposely so composed by men of superior intelligence, and here we call to mind the *Chansons* of Béranger. But usually they are the natural exponent of the vulgar thought in the person of a vulgar thinker. In either case they claim for themselves that which, for want of a more definite expression, has been called by critics "nationality." Whether this nationality in letters is a fit object for high-minded ambition, we cannot here pause to inquire. If it is, then Captain Marryat occupies a more desirable position than, in our heart, we are willing to award him.

*Joseph Rushbrook*¹ is not a book with which the critic should occupy many paragraphs. It is not very dissimilar to *Poor Jack*, which latter is, perhaps, the best specimen of its author's cast of thought and national manner, although inferior in interest to *Peter Simple*.

The plot can only please those who swallow the probabilities of *Sinbad the Sailor*, or *Jack and the Bean-Stalk*,—or, we should have said, more strictly, the incidents; for plot, properly speaking, there is none at all.

Joseph Rushbrook is an English soldier who, having long served his country and received a wound in the head, is pensioned and discharged. He becomes a poacher, and educates his son (the hero of the tale, and also named Joseph) to the same profession. A pedlar, named Byres, is about to betray the father, who avenges himself by shooting him. The son takes the burden of the crime upon himself, and flees the country. A reward is offered for his apprehension—a reward which one Furness, a schoolmaster, is very anxious to obtain. This Furness dogs the footsteps of our hero, much as Fagin, the Jew, dogs those of Oliver Twist, forcing him to quit place after place, just as he begins to get comfortably settled. In thus roaming about, little Joseph meets with all kinds of outra-

¹ *Joseph Rushbrook, or, The Poscher.* By Captain Marryat, author of *Peter Simple*, *Jacob Faithful*, etc. Two volumes. Philadelphia: Carey & Hart.

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geously improbable adventures; and not only this, but the reader is bored to death with the outrageously improbable adventures of every one with whom little Joseph comes in contact. Good fortune absolutely besets him. Money falls at his feet wherever he goes, and he has only to stoop to pick it up. At length he arrives at the height of prosperity, and thinks he is entirely rid of Furness, when Furness reappears. That Joseph should, in the end, be brought to trial for the pedlar's murder is so clearly the author's design, that he who runs may read it, and we naturally suppose that his persecutor, Furness, is to be the instrument of this evil. We suppose, also, of course, that in bringing this misfortune upon our hero, the schoolmaster will involve himself in ruin, in accordance with the common ideas of poetical justice. But no; Furness, being found in the way, is killed off accidentally, having lived and plotted, to no ostensible purpose, through the better half of the book. Circumstances that have nothing to do with the story involve Joseph in his trial. He refuses to divulge the real secret of the murder, and is sentenced to transportation. The elder Rushbrook, in the meantime, has avoided suspicion and fallen heir to a great property. Just as his son is about to be sent across the water, some of Joe's friends discover the true state of affairs, and obtain from the father, who is now conveniently upon his death-bed, a confession of his guilt. Thus all ends well—if the word

well can be applied in any sense to trash so ineffable; the father dies, the son is released, inherits the estate, marries his lady-love, and prospers in every possible and impossible way.

We have mentioned the imitation of Fagin. A second plagiarism is feebly attempted in the character of one Nancy, a trull, who is based upon the Nancy of *Oliver Twist*, for Marryat is not often at the trouble of diversifying his thefts. This Nancy changes her name three or four times, and so in fact do each and all of the *dramatis personæ*. This changing of name is one of the bright ideas with which the author of *Peter Simple* is most pertinaciously afflicted. We would not be bound to say how many aliases are borne by the hero in this instance—some dozen, perhaps.

The novels of Marryat, his later ones at least, are evidently written to order, for certain considerations, and have to be delivered within certain periods. He thus finds it his interest to push on. Now, for this mode of progress, incident is the sole thing which answers. One incident begets another, and so on *ad infinitum*. There is never the slightest necessity for pausing, especially where no plot is to be cared for. Comment, in the author's own person, upon what is transacting, is left entirely out of question. There is thus none of that binding power perceptible which often gives a species of unity (the unity of the writer's individual thought) to the most random narrations.

Frederick Marryat

All works composed as we have stated Marryat's to be composed, will be run on, incidentally, in the manner described; and, notwithstanding that it would seem at first sight to be otherwise, yet it is true that no works are so insufferably tedious. These are the novels which we read with a hurry exactly consonant and proportionate with that in which they were indited. We seldom leave them unfinished, yet we labor through to the end, and reach it with unalloyed pleasure.

The commenting force can never be safely disregarded. It is far better to have a dearth of incident, with skilful observations upon it, than the utmost variety of event without. In some previous review we have observed (and our observation is borne out by analysis) that it was the deep sense of the want of this binding and commenting power in the old Greek drama which gave rise to the chorus. The chorus came at length to supply, in some measure, a deficiency which is inseparable from dramatic action, and represented the expression of the public interest or sympathy in the matters transacted. The successful novelist must, in the same manner, be careful to bring into view his private interest, sympathy, and opinion, in regard to his own creations.

We have spoken of *The Poacher* at greater length than we intended; for it deserves little more than an announcement. It has the merit of a homely and not unnatural simplicity of style, and is not destitute

Frederick Marryat

of pathos; but this is all. Its English is excessively slovenly. Its events are monstrously improbable. There is no adaptation of parts about it. The truth is, it is a pitiable production. There are twenty young men of our acquaintance who make no pretension to literary ability, yet who could produce a better book in a week.





Margaret Miller and Lucretia Maria Davidson

THE name of Lucretia Davidson is familiar to all readers of poetry. Dying at the early age of seventeen, she has been rendered famous not less, and certainly not more, by her own precocious genius than by three memorable biographies —one by President Morse of the American Society of Arts, another by Miss Sedgwick, and a third by Robert Southey. Mr. Irving had formed an acquaintance with some of her relatives, and thus, while in Europe, took great interest in all that was said or written of his young countrywoman. Upon his return to America he called upon Mrs. Davidson, and then, in 1833, first saw the subject of the memoir now before us,¹ a fairy-like child of eleven. Three years afterward he met with her again, and then found her in delicate health. Three years having again elapsed, the MSS.

¹ *Biography and Poetical Remains of the late Margaret Miller Davidson.* By Washington Irving. Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard.

which form the basis of the present volume were placed in his hands by Mrs. Davidson, as all that remained of her daughter.

Few books have interested us more profoundly. Yet the interest does not appertain solely to Margaret. "In fact, the narrative," says Mr. Irving, "will be found almost as illustrative of the character of the mother as of the child; they were singularly identified in taste, feeling, and pursuits; tenderly entwined together by maternal and filial affection, they reflected an inexpressibly touching grace and interest upon each other by this holy relationship, and, to my mind, it would be marring one of the most beautiful and affecting groups in modern literature, to sunder them." In these words the biographer conveys no more than a just idea of the exquisite loveliness of the picture here presented to view.

The MSS. handed Mr. Irving have been suffered, in a great measure, to tell their own thrilling tale. There has been no injudicious attempt at mere authorship. The compiler has confined himself to chronological arrangement of his memoranda, and to such simple and natural comments as serve to bind rather than to illustrate where no illustration was needed. These memoranda consist of relations by Mrs. Davidson of the infantine peculiarities of her daughter, and of her habits and general thoughts in more matured life, intermingled with letters from the young poetess to

intimate friends. There is also a letter from the bereaved mother to Miss Sedgwick, detailing the last moments of the child—a letter so full of all potent nature, so full of minute beauty, and truth, and pathos, that to read it without tears would be to prove one's self less than human.

The *Poetical Remains* of this young creature, who perished of consumption in her sixteenth year, occupy about two hundred pages of a somewhat closely printed octavo. The longest poem is called *Lenore*, and consists of some two thousand lines, varying in metre from the ordinary octo-syllabic to the four-footed, or twelve-syllabled iambic. The story, which is a romantic love-tale, not ill-conceived in its incidents, is told with a skill which might put more practised bards to the blush, and with occasional bursts of the truest poetic fire. But, although as indicative of her future power, it is the most important as it is the longest of her productions, yet, as a whole, it is not equal to some of her shorter compositions. It was written not long before her death, at the age of fifteen, and, as we glean from the biography, after patient reflection, with much care, and with a high resolve to do something for fame. As the work of so mere a child, it is unquestionably wonderful. Its length, viewed in connection with its keeping, its unity, its adaptation, and completeness, will impress the meta-physician most forcibly, when surveying the capacities

of its author. Powers are here brought into play which are the last to be matured. For fancy we might have looked, and for the lower evidences of skill in a perfect versification and the like, but hardly for what we see in *Lenore*.

Yet remarkable as this production is, from the pen of a girl of fifteen, it is by no means so incomprehensible as are some of the shorter pieces. We have known instances,—rarely, to be sure,—but still we have known instances when finer poems in every respect than *Lenore* have been written by children of an immature age; but we look around us in vain for anything composed at eight years which can bear comparison with the lines subjoined:

TO MAMMA

Farewell, dear mother; for a while
I must resign thy plaintive smile;
May angels watch thy couch of woe,
And joys unceasing round thee flow.

May the Almighty Father spread
His sheltering wings above thy head.
It is not long that we must part,
Then cheer thy downcast, drooping heart.

Remember, oh! remember me,
Unceasing is my love for thee.
When death shall sever earthly ties,
When thy loved form all senseless lies,

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Oh! that my form with thine could flee,
And roam through wide eternity;
Could tread with thee the courts of heaven,
And count the brilliant stars of even!

Nor are these stanzas, written at ten, in any degree less remarkable:

MY NATIVE LAKE

Thy verdant banks, thy lucid stream,
Lit by the sun's resplendent beam,
Reflect each bending tree so light
Upon thy bounding bosom bright.
Could I but see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain!

The little isles that deck thy breast,
And calmly on thy bosom rest,
How often, in my childish glee,
I've sported round them, bright and free!
Could I but see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain!

How oft I've watched the freshening shower,
Bending the summer tree and flower,
And felt my little heart beat high
As the bright rainbow graced the sky!
Could I but see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain!

And shall I never see thee more,
My native lake, my much-loved shore;

And must I bid a long adieu,
My dear, my infant home, to you ?
Shall I not see thee once again,
My own, my beautiful Champlain ?

In the way of criticism upon these extraordinary compositions, Mr. Irving has attempted little, and, in general, he seems more affected by the loveliness and the purity of the child than even by the genius she has evinced, however highly he may have estimated this latter. In respect, however, to a poem entitled *My Sister Lucretia*, he thus speaks: "We have said that the example of her sister Lucretia was incessantly before her, and no better proof can be given of it than in the following lines, which breathe the heavenly aspirations of her pure young spirit, in strains to us quite unearthly. We may have read poetry more artificially perfect in its structure, but never any more truly divine in its inspiration." The nature of inspiration is disputable, and we will not pretend to assert that Mr. Irving is in the wrong. His words, however, in their hyperbole, do wrong to his subject, and would be hyperbole still if applied to the most exalted poets of all time.

The analogies of nature are universal; and just as the most rapidly growing herbage is the most speedy in its decay, just as the ephemera struggles to perfection in a day only to perish in that day's decline, so the mind is early matured only to be early in its de-

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cadence; and when we behold in the eye of infancy the soul of the adult, it is but indulging in a day-dream to hope for any further proportionate development. Should the prodigy survive to ripe age, a mental imbecility, not far removed from idiocy itself, is too frequently the result. From this rule the exceptions are rare indeed; but it should be observed that, when the exception does occur, the intellect is of a Titan cast even to the days of its extreme senility, and acquires renown not in one, but in all the wide fields of fancy and of reason.

Lucretia Maria Davidson,¹ the elder of the two sweet sisters who have acquired so much of fame prematurely, had not, like Margaret, an object of poetical emulation in her own family. In her genius, be it what it may, there is more of self-dependence, less of the imitative. Her mother's generous romance of soul may have stimulated, but did not instruct. Thus, although she has actually given less evidence of power (in our opinion) than Margaret, less written proof,—still its indication must be considered at higher value. Both perished at sixteen. Margaret, we think, has left the better poems,—certainly the more precocious, while Lucretia evinces more unequivocally the soul of the poet. We have quoted in full some stanzas composed by the former at eight years of age. The latter's

¹ *Poetical Remains of the late Lucretia Maria Davidson. Collected and Arranged by her Mother; with a Biography by Miss Sedgwick.* Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard.

earliest effusions are dated at fourteen. Yet the first compositions of the two seem to us of nearly equal merit.

The most elaborate production of Margaret is *Lenore*. It was written not long before her death, at the age of fifteen, after patient reflection, with much care, and with all that high resolve to do something for fame with which the reputation of her sister had inspired her. Under such circumstances, and with the early poetical education which she could not have failed to receive, we confess that, granting her a trifle more than average talent, it would have been rather a matter for surprise had she produced a worse than had she produced a better poem than *Lenore*. Its length, viewed in connection with its keeping, its unity, its adaptation, and its completeness (and all these are points having reference to artistical knowledge and perseverance), will impress the critic more favorably than its fancy, or any other indication of poetic power. In all the more important qualities, we have seen far, very far, finer poems than *Lenore* written at a much earlier age than fifteen.

Amir Khan, the longest and chief composition of Lucretia, has been long known to the reading public. Partly through Professor Morse, yet no doubt partly through their own merits, the poems found their way to Southey, who, after his peculiar fashion, and not unmindful of his previous *furores* in the case of Kirke

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White, Chatterton, and others of precocious ability, or at least celebrity, thought proper to review them in the *Quarterly*. This was at a period when we humbled ourselves, with a subserviency which would have been disgusting had it not been ludicrous, before the crudest critical *dicta* of Great Britain. It pleased the laureate, after some squibbing in the way of demurrer, to speak of the book in question as follows: "In these poems there is enough of originality, enough of aspiration, enough of conscious energy, enough of growing power to warrant any expectations, however sanguine, which the patrons and the friends and parents of the deceased could have formed." Meaning nothing, or rather meaning anything, as we choose to interpret it, this sentence was still sufficient (and, in fact, the half of it would have been more than sufficient) to establish upon an immovable basis the reputation of Miss Davidson in America. Thenceforward any examination of her true claims to distinction was considered little less than a declaration of heresy. Nor does the awe of the laureate's *ipse dixit* seem even yet to have entirely subsided. "The genius of Lucretia Davidson," says Miss Sedgwick, "has had the meed of far more authoritative praise than ours; the following tribute is from the *London Quarterly Review*." What this lady, for whom and for whose opinion we still have the highest respect, can mean by calling the praise of Southey "more authoritative" than her own, is a point we

shall not pause to determine. Her praise is at least honest, or we hope so. Its "authority" is in exact proportion with each one's estimate of her judgment. But it would not do to say all this of the author of *Thalaba*. It would not do to say it in the hearing of men who are sane, and who, being sane, have perused the leading articles in the *London Quarterly Review* during the ten or fifteen years prior to that period when Robert Southey, having concocted *The Doctor*, took definite leave of his wits. In fact, for anything that we have yet seen or heard to the contrary, the opinion of the laureate, in respect to the poem of *Amir Khan*, is a matter still only known to Robert Southey. But were it known to all the world, as Miss Sedgwick supposes with so charmingly innocent an air; we mean to say, were it really an honest opinion,—this "authoritative praise,"—still it would be worth, in the eyes of every sensible person, only just so much as it demonstrates or makes a show of demonstrating. Happily the day has gone by, and we trust forever, when men are content to swear blindly by the words of a master, poet-laureate though he be. But what Southey says of the poem is at best an opinion and no more. What Miss Sedgwick says of it is very much in the same predicament. "*Amir Khan*," she writes, "has long been before the public, but we think it has suffered from a very general and natural distrust of precocious genius. The versification is graceful, the

story beautifully developed, and the orientalism well sustained. We think it would not have done discredit to our most popular poets in the meridian of their fame; as the production of a girl of fifteen it seems prodigious." The cant of a kind heart when betraying into error a naturally sound judgment is perhaps the only species of cant in the world not altogether contemptible.

We yield to no one in warmth of admiration for the personal character of these sweet sisters, as that character is depicted by the mother, by Miss Sedgwick, and Mr. Irving. But it costs us no effort to distinguish that which, in our heart, is love of their worth, from that which, in our intellect, is appreciation of their poetic ability. With the former, as critic, we have nothing to do. The distinction is one too obvious for comment; and its observation would have spared us much twaddle on the part of the commentators upon *Amir Khan*.

We will endeavor to convey, as concisely as possible, some idea of this poem as it exists, not in the fancy of the enthusiastic, but in fact. It includes four hundred and forty lines. The metre is chiefly octo-syllabic. At one point it is varied by a casual introduction of an anapæst in the first and second foot; at another, in a song, by seven stanzas of four lines each, rhyming alternately, the metre anapæstic of four feet alternating with three. The versification is always

good, so far as the meagre written rules of our English prosody extend; that is to say, there is seldom a syllable too much or too little; but long and short syllables are placed at random, and a crowd of consonants sometimes renders a line unpronounceable. For example:

He loved,—and oh, he loved so well
That sorrow scarce dared break the spell.

At times, again, the rhythm lapses, in the most inartistical manner and evidently without design, from one species to another altogether incongruous; as, for example, in the sixth line of these eight, where the tipping anapaestic stumbles into the demure iambic, recovering itself, even more awkwardly, in the conclusion:

Bright Star of the Morning! this bosom is cold—
I was forced from my native shade,
And I wrapped me around with my mantle's fold,
A sad, mournful Circassian maid!
And I then vowed that rapture should never move
This changeless cheek, this rayless eye,
And I then vowed to feel neither bliss nor love,
But I vowed I would meet thee and die.

Occasionally the versification rises into melody and even strength; as here,

'T was at the hour when Peris love
To gaze upon the heaven above,
Whose portals, bright with many a gem,
Are closed, forever closed, on them.

Upon the whole, however, it is feeble, vacillating, and ineffective, giving token of having been "touched up" by the hand of a friend from a much worse into its present condition. Such rhymes as "floor" and "shower," "ceased" and "breast," "shade" and "spread," "brow" and "woe," "clear" and "far," "clear" and "air," "morning" and "dawning," "forth" and "earth," "step" and "deep," "Khan" and "hand," are constantly occurring; and although, certainly, we should not, as a general rule, expect better things from a girl of sixteen, we still look in vain, and with something very much akin to a smile, for aught even approaching that "marvellous ease and grace of versification" about which Miss Sedgwick, in the benevolence of her heart, discourses.

Nor does the story, to our dispassionate apprehension, appear "beautifully developed." It runs thus: Amir Khan, Subahdar of Cachemere, weds a Circassian slave who, cold as a statue and as obstinately silent, refuses to return his love. The Subahdar applies to a magician, who gives him

a pensive flower
Gathered at midnight's magic hour,

the effect of whose perfume renders him apparently lifeless while still in possession of all his senses. Amreeta, the slave, supposing her lover dead, gives way to clamorous grief, and reveals the secret love which

she has long borne her lord, but refused to divulge because a slave. Amir Khan hereupon revives, and all trouble is at an end.

Of course, no one at all read in Eastern fable will be willing to give Miss Davidson credit for originality in the conception of this little story; and if she have claim to merit at all, as regards it, that claim must be founded upon the manner of narration. But it will be at once evident that the most naked outline alone can be given in the compass of four hundred and forty lines. The tale is, in sober fact, told very much as any young person might be expected to tell it. The strength of the narrator is wholly laid out upon a description of moonlight, in the usual style, with which the poem commences; upon a second description of moonlight, in precisely the same manner, with which a second division commences; and in a third description of the hall in which the entranced Subahdar reposes. This is all, absolutely all; or at least the rest has the nakedness of mere catalogue. We recognize, throughout, the poetic sentiment, but little, very little, of poetic power. We see occasional gleams of imagination; for example:

And every crystal cloud of heaven
Bowed as it passed the queen of even. . . .

Amreeta was cold as the marble floor
That glistens beneath the nightly shower. . . .

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At that calm hour when Peris love
To gaze upon the heaven above,
Whose portals, bright with many a gem,
Are closed, forever closed, on them. . . .

The Subahdar with noiseless step
Rushed like the night-breeze o'er the deep.

We look in vain for another instance worth quoting. But were the fancy seen in these examples observable either in the general conduct or in the incidents of the narrative, we should not feel obliged to disagree so unequivocally with that opinion which pronounces this clever little production "one which would not have done discredit to our most popular poets in the meridian of their fame"!

"As the work of a girl of sixteen," most assuredly we do not think it "prodigious." In regard to it we may repeat what we said of *Lenore*, that we have seen finer poems in every respect, written by children of more immature age. It is a creditable composition; nothing beyond this. And, in so saying, we shall startle none but the brainless and the adopters of ready-made ideas. We are convinced that we express the unuttered sentiment of every educated individual who has read the poem. Nor, having given the plain facts of the case, do we feel called upon to proffer any apology for our flat refusal to play ditto either to Miss Sedgwick, to Mr. Irving, or to Mr. Southey.



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CHARLES O'MALLEY, Harry Lorrequer, Valentine Vox, Stanley Thorn, and some other effusions are novels depending for effect upon what gave popularity to *Peregrine Pickle*,—we mean practical joke. To men whose animal spirits are high, whatever may be their mental ability, such works are always acceptable. To the uneducated, to those who read little, to the obtuse in intellect (and these three classes constitute the mass), these books are not only acceptable, but are the only ones which can be called so. We here make two divisions: that of the men who can think, but who dislike thinking; and that of the men who either have not been presented with the materials for thought, or who have no brains with which to "work up" the material. With these classes of people *Stanley Thorn* is a favorite. It not only demands no reflection, but repels it, or dissi-

¹*Stanley Thorn.* By Henry Cockton, Esq., author of *Valentine Vox, the Ventriloquist*, etc., with numerous illustrations, designed by Cruikshank, Leech, etc., and engraved by Yeager. Lea & Blanchard, Philadelphia.

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pates it, much as a silver rattle the wrath of a child. It is not in the least degree suggestive. Its readers arise from its perusal with the identical idea in possession at sitting down. Yet, during perusal, there has been a tingling physico-mental exhilaration, something like that induced by a cold bath, or a flesh-brush, or a gallop on horseback,—a very delightful and very healthful matter in its way. But these things are not letters. *Valentine Vox* and *Charles O'Malley* are no more “ literature ” than catgut is music. The visible and tangible tricks of a baboon belong not less to the *belles-lettres* than does *Harry Lorrequer*. When this gentleman adorns his countenance with lampblack, knocks over an apple-woman, or brings about a rent in his pantaloons, we laugh at him when bound up in a volume just as we would laugh at his adventures if happening before our eyes in the street. But mere incidents whether serious or comic, whether occurring or described,—mere incidents are not books. Neither are they the basis of books, of which the idiosyncrasy is thought in contradistinction from deed. A book without action cannot be; but a book is only such to the extent of its thought, independently of its deed. Thus of algebra, which is, or should be, defined as “ a mode of computing with symbols by means of signs.” With numbers, as algebra, it has nothing to do; and although no algebraic computation can proceed without numbers, yet algebra is only such

to the extent of its analysis independently of its arithmetic.

We do not mean to find fault with the class of performances of which *Stanley Thorn* is one. Whatever tends to the amusement of man tends to his benefit. Aristotle, with singular assurance, has declared poetry the most philosophical of all writings (*spoudiotaton kai philosophikotaton genos*), defending it principally upon that score. He seems to think, and many following him have thought, that the end of all literature should be instruction, a favorite dogma of the school of Wordsworth. But it is a truism that the end of our existence is happiness. If so, the end of every separate aim of our existence, of everything connected with our existence, should be still happiness. Therefore the end of instruction should be happiness; and happiness, what is it but the extent or duration of pleasure? therefore the end of instruction should be pleasure. But the cant of the Lakists would establish the exact converse, and make the end of all pleasure instruction. In fact, *ceteris paribus*, he who pleases is of more importance to his fellow-man than he who instructs, since the *dulce* is alone the *utile*, and pleasure is the end already attained, which instruction is merely the means of attaining. It will be said that Wordsworth, with Aristotle, has reference to instruction with eternity in view; but either such cannot be the tendency of his argument, or he is laboring

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at a sad disadvantage; for his works, or at least those of his school, are professedly to be understood by the few, and it is the many who stand in need of salvation. Thus the moralist's parade of measures would be as completely thrown away as are those of the devil in *Melmoth*, who plots and counterplots through three octavo volumes for the entrapment of one or two souls, while any common devil would have demolished one or two thousand.

When, therefore, we assert that these practical-joke publications are not "literature," because not "thoughtful" in any degree, we must not be understood as objecting to the thing in itself, but to its claims upon our attention as critic. Dr.—what is his name?—strings together a number of facts or fancies which, when printed, answer the laudable purpose of amusing a very large, if not a very respectable, number of people. To this proceeding upon the part of the Doctor, or on the part of his imitator, Mr. Jeremy Stockton, the author of *Valentine Vox*, we can have no objection whatever. His books do not please us. We will not read them. Still less shall we speak of them seriously as books. Being in no respect works of art, they neither deserve, nor are amenable to, criticism.

Stanley Thorn may be described in brief as a collection, rather than as a series, of practical haps and mishaps befalling a young man very badly brought up by his mother. He flogs his father with a codfish, and

does other similar things. We have no fault to find with him whatever, except that, in the end, he does not come to the gallows.

We have no great fault to find with him, but with Mr. Bockton, his father, much. He is a consummate plagiarist; and, in our opinion, nothing more despicable exists. There is not a good incident in his book (?) of which we cannot point out the paternity with at least a sufficient precision. The opening adventures are all in the style of *Cyril Thornton*. Bob, following Amelia in disguise, is borrowed from one of the Smollett or Fielding novels—there are many of our readers who will be able to say which. The cab driven over the Crescent *trottoir*, is from *Pierce Egan*. The swindling tricks of Colonel Somebody, at the commencement of the novel, and of Captain Filcher afterward, are from *Pickwick Abroad*. The doings at Madame Pompour's (or some such name), with the description of Isabelle, are from *Écarté; or, The Salons of Paris*, a rich book. The Sons-of-Glory scene (or its wraith) we have seen somewhere; while, not to be tedious, the whole account of Stanley's election, from his first conception of the design, through the entire canvass,—the purchasing of the "Independents," the row at the hustings, the chairing, the feast, and the petition,—is so obviously stolen from *Ten Thousand a Year*, as to be disgusting. Bob and the "old venerable"—what are they but feeble reflections

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of young and old Weller? The tone of the narration throughout is an absurd echo of Boz. For example: “ ‘ We ’ve come agin about them there little accounts of ourn; question is, do you mean to settle ’em or don’t you ? ’ His colleagues, by whom he was backed, highly approved of this question, and winked and nodded with the view of intimating to each other that in their judgment that was the point.” Who so dull as to give Mr. Bogton any more credit for these things than we give the buffoon for the rôle which he has committed to memory ?





Charles Dickens¹

WE often hear it said of this or of that proposition, that it may be good in theory, but will not answer in practice; and in such assertions we find the substance of all the sneers at critical art which so gracefully curl the upper lips of a tribe which is beneath it. We mean the small geniuses, the literary Titmice, animalculæ which judge of merit solely by result, and boast of the solidity, tangibility, and infallibility of the test which they employ. The worth of a work is most accurately estimated, they assure us, by the number of those who peruse it; and "Does a book sell?" is a query embodying, in their opinion, all that need be said on the topic of its fitness for sale. We should as soon think of maintaining, in the presence of these creatures, the dictum of Anaxagoras, that snow is black, as of disputing, for example, the profundity of that genius which, in a run

¹ *Barnaby Rudge*, By Charles Dickens (Boz). Author of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *Pickwick*, *Oliver Twist*, etc. With numerous illustrations, by Cattermole, Browne, and Sibson. Lea & Blanchard, Philadelphia.

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of five hundred nights, has rendered itself evident in *London Assurance*. "What," cry they, "are critical precepts to us or to anybody? Were we to observe all the critical rules in creation we should still be unable to write a good book," a point, by the way, which we shall not now pause to deny. "Give us results," they vociferate, "for we are plain men of common sense. We contend for fact instead of fancy; for practice in opposition to theory."

The mistake into which the Titmice have been innocently led, however, is precisely that of dividing the practice which they would uphold, from the theory to which they would object. They should have been told in infancy, and thus prevented from exposing themselves in old age, that theory and practice are in so much one, that the former implies or includes the latter. A theory is only good as such, in proportion to its reducibility to practice. If the practice fail, it is because the theory is imperfect. To say what they are in the daily habit of saying, that such or such a matter may be good in theory but is false in practice, is to perpetrate a bull, to commit a paradox, to state a contradiction in terms,—in plain words, to tell a lie which is a lie at sight to the understanding of any thing bigger than a Titmouse.

But we have no idea, just now, of persecuting the Tittlebats by too close a scrutiny into their little opinions. It is not our purpose, for example, to press them

with so grave a weapon as the *argumentum ad absurdum*, or to ask them why, if the popularity of a book be in fact the measure of its worth, we should not be at once in condition to admit the inferiority of Newton's *Principia*, to Hoyle's *Games*; of *Earnest Maltravers* to *Jack-the-Giant-Killer*, or *Jack Sheppard*, or *Jack Brag*; and of Dick's *Christian Philosopher* to *Charlotte Temple*, or the *Memoirs of de Grammont*, or to one or two dozen other works which must be nameless. Our present design is but to speak, at some length, of a book which in so much concerns the Titmice, that it affords them the very kind of demonstration which they chiefly affect—*practical* demonstration—of the fallacy of one of their favorite dogmas; we mean the dogma that no work of fiction can fully suit, at the same time, the critical and the popular taste; in fact, that the disregarding or contravening of critical rule is absolutely essential to success, beyond a certain and very limited extent, with the public at large. And if, in the course of our random observations, for we have no space for systematic review, it should appear, incidentally, that the vast popularity of *Barnaby Rudge* must be regarded less as the measure of its value than as the legitimate and inevitable result of certain well-understood critical propositions reduced by genius into practice, there will appear nothing more than what has before become apparent in the *Vicar of Wakefield* of Goldsmith, or in the *Robinson Crusoe* of

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De Foe—nothing more, in fact, than what is a truism to all but the Titmice.

Those who know us will not, from what is here premised, suppose it our intention to enter into any wholesale laudation of *Barnaby Rudge*. In truth, our design may appear, at a cursory glance, to be very different indeed. Boccalini, in his *Advertisements from Parnassus*, tells us that a critic once presented Apollo with a severe censure upon an excellent poem. The god asked him for the beauties of the work. He replied that he only troubled himself about the errors. Apollo presented him with a sack of unwinnowed wheat, and bade him pick out all the chaff for his pains. Now we have not fully made up our minds that the god was in the right. We are not sure that the limit of critical duty is not very generally misapprehended. Excellence may be considered an axiom, or a proposition which becomes self-evident just in proportion to the clearness or precision with which it is put. If it fairly exists, in this sense, it requires no further elucidation. It is not excellence if it need to be demonstrated as such. To point out too particularly the beauties of a work is to admit, tacitly, that these beauties are not wholly admirable. Regarding, then, excellence as that which is capable of self-manifestation, it but remains for the critic to show when, where, and how it fails in becoming manifest; and, in this showing, it will be the fault of the book itself if what of

beauty it contains be not, at least, placed in the fairest light. In a word, we may assume, notwithstanding a vast deal of pitiable cant upon this topic, that in pointing out frankly the errors of a work, we do nearly all that is critically necessary in displaying its merits. In teaching what perfection is, how, in fact, shall we more rationally proceed than in specifying what it is not?

The plot of *Barnaby Rudge* runs thus: About a hundred years ago, Geoffrey Haredale and John Chester were schoolmates in England, the former being the scapegoat and drudge of the latter. Leaving school, the boys became friends, with much of the old understanding. Haredale loves; Chester deprives him of his mistress. The one cherishes the most deadly hatred; the other merely contemns and avoids. By routes widely different both attain mature age. Haredale, remembering his old love, and still cherishing his old hatred, remains a bachelor and is poor. Chester, among other crimes, is guilty of the seduction and heartless abandonment of a gypsy girl, who, after the desertion of her lover, gives birth to a son, and, falling into evil courses, is finally hung at Tyburn. The son is received and taken charge of, at an inn called the Maypole, upon the borders of Epping Forest and about twelve miles from London. This inn is kept by one John Willet, a burly-headed and very obtuse little man, who has a son, Joe, and who employs his protégé,

under the single name of Hugh, as perpetual hostler at the inn. Hugh's father marries, in the meantime, a rich *parvenu*, who soon dies, but not before having presented Mr. Chester with a boy, Edward. The father (a thoroughly selfish man-of-the-world, whose model is Chesterfield) educates this son at a distance, seeing him rarely, and calling him to the paternal residence at London, only when he has attained the age of twenty-four or five. He, the father, has, long ere this time, spent the fortune brought him by his wife, having been living upon his wits and a small annuity for some eighteen years. The son is recalled chiefly that by marrying an heiress, on the strength of his own personal merit and the reputed wealth of old Chester, he may enable the latter to continue his gayeties in old age. But of this design, as well as of his poverty, Edward is kept in ignorance for some three or four years after his recall, when the father's discovery of what he considers an inexpedient love-entanglement on the part of the son induces him to disclose the true state of his affairs, as well as the real tenor of his intentions.

Now, the love-entanglement of which we speak is considered inexpedient by Mr. Chester for two reasons, the first of which is, that the lady beloved is the orphan niece of his old enemy, Haredale, and the second is, that Haredale, although in circumstances which have been much and very unexpectedly improved during

the preceding twenty-two years, is still insufficiently wealthy to meet the views of Mr. Chester.

We say that, about twenty-two years before the period in question, there came an unlooked-for change in the worldly circumstances of Haredale. This gentleman has an elder brother, Reuben, who has long possessed the family inheritance of the Haredales, residing at a mansion called "The Warren," not far from the Maypole Inn, which is itself a portion of the estate. Reuben *is a widower*, with one child, a daughter, Emma. Besides this daughter, there are living with him a gardener, a steward, whose name is Rudge, and two women servants, one of whom is the wife of Rudge. On the night of the nineteenth of March, 1733, Rudge murders his master for the sake of a large sum of money which he is known to have in possession. During the struggle, Mr. Haredale grasps the cord of an alarm-bell which hangs within his reach, but succeeds in sounding it only once or twice, when it is severed by the knife of the ruffian, who then, completing his bloody business and securing the money, proceeds to quit the chamber. While doing this, however, he is disconcerted by meeting the gardener, whose pallid countenance evinces suspicion of the deed committed. The murderer is thus forced to kill his fellow-servant. Having done so, the idea strikes him of transferring the burden of the crime from himself. He dresses the corpse of the gardener

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in his own clothes, puts upon its finger his own ring, and in its pocket his own watch, then drags it to a pond in the grounds and throws it in. He now returns to the house, and, disclosing all to his wife, requests her to become a partner in his flight. Horror-stricken, she falls to the ground. He attempts to raise her. She seizes his wrist, staining her hand with blood in the attempt. She renounces him forever; yet promises to conceal the crime. Alone, he flees the country. The next morning, Mr. Haredale being found murdered, and the steward and the gardener, being both missing, both are suspected. Mrs. Rudge leaves The Warren and retires to an obscure lodging in London, where she lives upon an annuity allowed her by Haredale, having given birth, on the very day after the murder, to a son, Barnaby Rudge, who proves an idiot, who bears upon his wrist a red mark, and who is born possessed with a maniacal horror of blood.

Some months since the assassination having elapsed, what appears to be the corpse of Rudge is discovered, and the outrage is attributed to the gardener. Yet not universally; for, as Geoffrey Haredale comes into possession of the estate, there are not wanting suspicions, fomented by Chester, of his own participation in the deed. This taint of suspicion, acting upon his hereditary gloom, together with the natural grief and horror of the atrocity, embitters the whole life of Haredale. He secludes himself at The Warren, and acquires a

monomaniac acerbity of temper relieved only by love of his beautiful niece.

Time wears away. Twenty-two years pass by. The niece has ripened in womanhood, and loves young Chester without the knowledge of her uncle or the youth's father. Hugh has grown a stalwart man, the type of man the animal, as his father is of man the ultra-civilized. Rudge, the murderer, returns, urged to his undoing by fate. He appears at the Maypole and inquires stealthily of the circumstances which have occurred at The Warren in his absence. He proceeds to London, discovers the dwelling of his wife, threatens her with the betrayal of her idiot son into vice, and extorts from her the bounty of Haredale. Revolting at such appropriation of such means, the widow, with Barnaby, again seeks The Warren, renounces the annuity, and, refusing to assign any reason for her conduct, states her intention of quitting London forever, and of burying herself in some obscure retreat; a retreat which she begs Haredale not to attempt discovering. When he seeks her in London the next day, she is gone; and there are no tidings either of herself or of Barnaby until the expiration of *five years*, which bring the time up to that of the celebrated "No Popery" Riots of Lord George Gordon.

In the meanwhile, and immediately subsequent to the reappearance of Rudge, Haredale and the elder Chester, each heartily desirous of preventing the union

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of Edward and Emma, have entered into a covenant, the result of which is that, by means of treachery on the part of Chester, permitted on that of Haredale, the lovers misunderstand each other and are estranged. Joe, also, the son of the innkeeper, Willet, having been coquettled with, to too great an extent by Dolly Varden, the pretty daughter of one Gabriel Varden, a locksmith of Clerkenwell, London, and having been otherwise maltreated at home, enlists in His Majesty's army, and is carried beyond seas to America, not returning until toward the close of the riots. Just before their commencement, Rudge, in a midnight prowl about the scene of his atrocity, is encountered by an individual who had been familiar with him in earlier life, while living at The Warren. This individual, terrified at what he supposes, very naturally, to be the ghost of the murdered Rudge, relates his adventure to his companions at the Maypole, and John Willet conveys the intelligence forthwith to Mr. Haredale. Connecting the apparition, in his own mind, with the peculiar conduct of Mrs. Rudge, this gentleman imbibes a suspicion at once of the true state of affairs. This suspicion, which he mentions to no one, is, moreover, very strongly confirmed by an occurrence happening to Varden, the locksmith, who, visiting the woman late one night, finds her in communion of a nature apparently most confidential, with a ruffian whom the locksmith knows to be such, without knowing

the man himself. Upon an attempt on the part of Varden to seize this ruffian, he is thwarted by Mrs. R.; and upon Haredale's inquiring minutely into the personal appearance of the man, he is found to accord with Rudge. We have already shown that the ruffian was, in fact, Rudge himself. Acting upon the suspicion thus aroused, Haredale watches by night, alone, in the deserted house formerly occupied by Mrs. R., in hope of here coming upon the murderer, and makes other exertions with the view of arresting him; but all in vain.

It is also at the conclusion of the *five years*, that the hitherto uninvaded retreat of Mrs. Rudge is disturbed by a message from her husband, demanding money. He has discovered her abode by accident. Giving him what she has at the time, she afterward eludes him, and hastens, with Barnaby, to bury herself in the crowd of London, until she can find opportunity again to seek retreat in some more distant region of England. But the riots have now begun. The idiot is beguiled into joining the mob, and, becoming separated from his mother (who, growing ill through grief, is borne to a hospital), meets with his old playmate, Hugh, and becomes with him a ringleader in the rebellion.

The riots proceed. A conspicuous part is borne in them by one Simon Tappertit, a fantastic and conceited little apprentice of Varden's, and a sworn enemy to Joe

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Willet, who has rivalled him in the affection of Dolly. A hangman, Dennis, is also very busy amid the mob. Lord George Gordon and his secretary, Gashford, with John Grueby, his servant, appear, of course, upon the scene. Old Chester, who, during the five years, has become Sir John, instigates Gashford, who has received personal insult from Haredale (a Catholic, and consequently obnoxious to the mob), instigates Gashford to procure the burning of The Warren, and to abduct Emma during the excitement ensuing. The mansion is burned (Hugh, who also fancies himself wronged by Haredale, being chief actor in the outrage), and Miss H. carried off, in company with Dolly, who had long lived with her, and whom Tappertit abducts upon his own responsibility. Rudge, in the meantime, finding the eye of Haredale upon him (since he has become aware of the watch kept nightly at his wife's), goaded by the dread of solitude, and fancying that his sole chance of safety lies in joining the rioters, hurries upon their track to the doomed Warren. He arrives too late; the mob have departed. Skulking about the ruins, he is discovered by Haredale and finally captured without a struggle, within the glowing walls of the very chamber in which the deed was committed. He is conveyed to prison, where he meets and recognizes Barnaby, who had been captured as a rioter. The mob assail and burn the jail. The father and son escape. Betrayed by Dennis, both are again

retaken, and Hugh shares their fate. In Newgate, Dennis, through accident, discovers the parentage of Hugh, and an effort is made in vain to interest Chester in behalf of his son. Finally Varden procures the pardon of Barnaby; but Hugh, Rudge, and Dennis are hung. At the eleventh hour, Joe returns from abroad with one arm. In company with Edward Chester he performs prodigies of valor, during the last riots, on behalf of the government. The two, with Haredale and Varden, rescue Emma and Dolly. A double marriage, of course, takes place; for Dolly has repented her fine airs, and the prejudices of Haredale are overcome. Having killed Chester in a duel, he quits England forever, and ends his days in the seclusion of an Italian convent. Thus, after summary disposal of the understrappers, ends the drama of *Barnaby Rudge*.

We have given, as may well be supposed, but a very meagre outline of the story, and we have given it in the simple or natural sequence. That is to say, we have related the events, as nearly as might be, in the order of their occurrence. But this order would by no means have suited the purpose of the novelist, whose design has been to maintain the secret of the murder, and the consequent mystery which encircles Rudge, and the actions of his wife, until the catastrophe of his discovery by Haredale. The thesis of the novel may thus be regarded as based upon curiosity. Every point is so arranged as to perplex the reader and whet his

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desire for elucidation; for example, the first appearance of Rudge at the Maypole, his questions, his persecution of Mrs. R., the ghost seen by the frequenter of the Maypole, and Haredale's impressive conduct in consequence. What we have told, in the very beginning of our digest, in regard to the shifting of the gardener's dress, is sedulously kept from the reader's knowledge until he learns it from Rudge's own confession in jail. We say sedulously; for, the intention once known, the traces of the design can be found upon every page. There is an amusing and exceedingly ingenious instance at page 145, where Solomon Daisy describes his adventure with the ghost.

“ ‘It was a ghost—a spirit,’ cried Daisy.

“ ‘Whose?’ they all three asked together.

“ In the excess of his emotion, for he fell back trembling in his chair and waved his hand as if entreating them to question him no further, his answer was lost upon all but old John Willet, who happened to be seated close beside him.

“ ‘Who?’ cried Parkes and Tom Cobb—‘Who was it?’

“ ‘Gentlemen,’ said Mr. Willet, after a long pause, “ ‘you need n’t ask. The likeness of a murdered man. This is the nineteenth of March.’

“ A profound silence ensued.”

The impression here skilfully conveyed is that the

ghost seen is that of Reuben Haredale; and the mind of the not-too-acute reader is at once averted from the true state of the case—from the murderer, Rudge, living in the body.

Now, there can be no question that, by such means as these, many points which are comparatively insipid in the natural sequence of our digest, and which would have been comparatively insipid even if given in full detail in a natural sequence, are endued with the interest of mystery; but neither can it be denied that a vast many more points are at the same time deprived of all effect and become null, through the impossibility of comprehending them without a key. The author, who, cognizant of his plot, writes with this cognizance continually operating upon him, and thus writes to himself in spite of himself, does not, of course, feel that much of what is effective to his own informed perception must necessarily be lost upon his uninformed readers; and he himself is never in condition, as regards his own work, to bring the matter to test. But the reader may easily satisfy himself of the validity of our objection. Let him reperuse *Barnaby Rudge*, and with a precomprehension of the mystery these points of which we speak break out in all directions like stars, and throw quadruple brilliance over the narrative, a brilliance which a correct taste will at once declare unprofitably sacrificed at the shrine of the keenest interest of mere mystery.

The design of mystery, however, being once determined upon by an author, it becomes imperative, first, that no undue or inartistical means be employed to conceal the secret of the plot; and, secondly, that the secret be well kept. Now, when, at page 16, we read that "the body of poor Mr. Rudge, the steward, was found," months after the outrage, etc., we see that Mr. Dickens has been guilty of no misdemeanor against art in stating what was not the fact, since the falsehood is put into the mouth of Solomon Daisy, and given merely as the impression of this individual and of the public. The writer has not asserted it in his own person, but ingeniously conveyed an idea (false in itself, yet a belief in which is necessary for the effect of the tale) by the mouth of one of his characters. The case is different, however, when Mrs. Rudge is repeatedly denominated "the widow." It is the author who, himself, frequently so terms her. This is disingenuous and inartistical—accidentally so, of course. We speak of the matter merely by way of illustrating our point and as an oversight on the part of Mr. Dickens.

That the secret be well kept is obviously necessary. A failure to preserve it until the proper moment of *dénouement*, throws all into confusion, so far as regards the effect intended. If the mystery leak out, against the author's will, his purposes are immediately at odds and ends; for he proceeds upon the supposition that certain impressions do exist, which do not exist, in the

mind of his readers. We are not prepared to say, so positively as we could wish, whether, by the public at large, the whole mystery of the murder committed by Rudge, with the identity of the Maypole ruffian with Rudge himself, was fathomed at any period previous to the period intended, or, if so, whether at a period so early as materially to interfere with the interest designed; but we are forced, through sheer modesty, to suppose this the case; since, by ourselves individually, the secret was distinctly understood immediately upon the perusal of the story of Solomon Daisy, which occurs at the seventh page of this volume of three hundred and twenty-three. In the number of the Philadelphia *Saturday Evening Post* for May the first, 1841 (the tale having then only begun), will be found a prospective notice of some length, in which we made use of the following words:

“That Barnaby is the son of the murderer may not appear evident to our readers, but we will explain. The person murdered is Mr. Reuben Haredale. He was found assassinated in his bed-chamber. His steward (Mr. Rudge, senior) and his gardener (name not mentioned) are missing. At first both are suspected. ‘Some months afterward’—here we use the words of the story—‘the steward’s body, scarcely to be recognized but by his clothes and the watch and ring he wore, was found at the bottom of a piece of water in the

grounds, with a deep gash in the breast, where he had been stabbed by a knife. He was only partly dressed; and all people agreed that he had been sitting up reading in his own room, where there were many traces of blood, and was suddenly fallen upon and killed before his master.'

"Now, be it observed, it is not the author himself who asserts that the steward's body was found; he has put the words in the mouth of one of his characters. His design is to make it appear, in the *dénouement*, that the steward, Rudge, first murdered the gardener, then went to his master's chamber, murdered him, was interrupted by his (Rudge's) wife, whom he seized and held by the wrist to prevent her giving the alarm; that he then, after possessing himself of the booty desired, returned to the gardener's room, exchanged clothes with him, put upon the corpse his own watch and ring, and secreted it where it was afterward discovered at so late a period that the features could not be identified."

The differences between our preconceived ideas, as here stated, and the actual facts of the story, will be found immaterial. The gardener was murdered, not before, but after, his master; and that Rudge's wife seized him by the wrist, instead of his seizing her, has so much the air of a mistake on the part of Mr. Dickens, that we can scarcely speak of our own version as erroneous. The grasp of a murderer's bloody hand on

the wrist of a woman *enceinte* would have been more likely to produce the effect described (and this every one will allow) than the grasp of the hand of the woman upon the wrist of the assassin. We may therefore say of our supposition, as Talleyrand said of some Cockney's bad French, *que s'il ne soit pas Français, assurément donc il le doit être*—that if we did not rightly prophesy, yet, at least, our prophecy should have been right.

We are informed in the preface to *Barnaby Rudge* that "no account of the Gordon Riots having been introduced into any work of fiction, and the subject presenting very extraordinary and remarkable features," our author "was led to project this tale." But for this distinct announcement (for Mr. Dickens can scarcely have deceived himself) we should have looked upon the riots as altogether an afterthought. It is evident that they have no necessary connection with the story. In our digest, which carefully includes all essentials of the plot, we have dismissed the doings of the mob in a paragraph. The whole event of the drama would have proceeded as well without as with them. They have even the appearance of being forcibly introduced. In our compendium above, it will be seen that we emphasize several allusions to an interval of *five years*. The action is brought up to a certain point. The train of events is, so far, uninterrupted,—nor is there any apparent need of interruption,—yet

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all the characters are now thrown forward for a period of *five years*. And why? We ask in vain. Is it not to bestow upon the lovers a more decorous maturity of age?—for this is the only possible idea which suggests itself. Edward Chester is already eight-and-twenty, and Emma Haredale would, in America at least, be upon the list of old maids. No, there is no such reason; nor does there appear to be any one more plausible than that, as it is now the year of our Lord 1775, an advance of five years will bring the *dramatis personæ* up to a very remarkable period, affording an admirable opportunity for their display—the period, in short, of the “No Popery” Riots. This was the idea with which we were forcibly impressed in perusal, and which nothing less than Mr. Dickens’s positive assurance to the contrary would have been sufficient to eradicate.

It is, perhaps, but one of a thousand instances of the disadvantages, both to the author and the public, of the present absurd fashion of periodical novel-writing, that our author had not sufficiently considered or determined upon any particular plot when he began the story now under review. In fact, we see, or fancy that we see, numerous traces of indecision—traces which a dexterous supervision of the complete work might have enabled him to erase. We have already spoken of the intermission of a lustrum. The opening speeches of old Chester are by far too truly gentlemanly

for his subsequent character. The wife of Varden, also, is too wholesome a shrew to be converted into the quiet wife—the original design was to punish her. At page 16, we read thus—Solomon Daisy is telling his story:

“ ‘I put as good a face upon it as I could, and, muffling myself up, started out with a lighted lantern in one hand and the key of the church in the other’—at this point of the narrative the dress of the strange man rustled as if he had turned to hear more distinctly.”

Here the design is to call the reader’s attention to a point in the tale; but no subsequent explanation is made. Again, a few lines below:

“ The houses were all shut up and the folks in doors, and perhaps there is only one man in the world who knows how dark it really was.”

Here the intention is still more evident, but there is no result. Again, at page 54, the idiot draws Mr. Chester to the window and directs his attention to the clothes hanging upon the lines in the yard:

“ ‘Look down,’ he said, softly; ‘do you mark how they whisper in each other’s ears, then dance and leap to make believe they are in sport? Do you see how they stop for a moment, when they think there is no one looking, and mutter among themselves again; and

then how they roll and gambol, delighted with the mischief they 've been plotting ? Look at 'em now ! See how they whirl and plunge. And now they stop again, and whisper cautiously together—little thinking, mind, how often I have lain upon the ground and watched them. I say—what is it that they plot and hatch ? Do you know ? ” ”

Upon perusal of these ravings we at once supposed them to have allusion to some real plotting ; and even now we cannot force ourselves to believe them not so intended They suggested the opinion that Haredale himself would be implicated in the murder, and that the counsellings alluded to might be those of that gentleman with Rudge. It is by no means impossible that some such conception wavered in the mind of the author. At page 32 we have a confirmation of our idea, when Varden endeavors to arrest the murderer in the house of his wife :

“ ‘ Come back—come back ! ’ exclaimed the woman, wrestling with and clasping him. ‘ Do not touch him, on your life ! He carries other lives beside his own.’ ”

The *dénouement* fails to account for this exclamation.

In the beginning of the story much emphasis is placed upon the two female servants of Haredale, and upon his journey to and from London, as well as upon

his wife. We have merely said, in our digest, that he was a widower, italicizing the remark. All these other points are, in fact, singularly irrelevant, in the supposition that the original design has not undergone modification.

Again, at page 57, when Haredale talks of "his dismantled and beggared hearth," we cannot help fancying that the author had in view some different wrong, or series of wrongs, perpetrated by Chester, than any which appear in the end. This gentleman, too, takes extreme and frequent pains to acquire dominion over the rough Hugh; this matter is particularly insisted upon by the novelist;—we look, of course, for some important result, but the filching of a letter is nearly all that is accomplished. That Barnaby's delight in the desperate scenes of the rebellion is inconsistent with his horror of blood will strike every reader; and this inconsistency seems to be the consequence of the afterthought upon which we have already commented. In fact, the title of the work, the elaborate and pointed manner of the commencement, the impressive description of The Warren, and especially of Mrs. Rudge, go so far to show that Mr. Dickens has really deceived himself,—that the soul of the plot, as originally conceived, was the murder of Haredale, with the subsequent discovery of the murderer in Rudge; but that this idea was afterward abandoned, or rather suffered to be merged in that of the

Popish riots. The result has been most unfavorable. That which, of itself, would have proved highly effective, has been rendered nearly null by its situation. In the multitudinous outrage and horror of the rebellion, the one atrocity is utterly whelmed and extinguished.

The reasons of this deflection from the first purpose appear to us self-evident. One of them we have already mentioned. The other is that our author discovered, when too late, that he had anticipated, and thus rendered valueless, his chief effect. This will be readily understood. The particulars of the assassination being withheld, the strength of the narrator is put forth, in the beginning of the story, to whet curiosity in respect to these particulars; and, so far, he is but in proper pursuance of his main design. But from this intention he unwittingly passes into the error of exaggerating anticipation. And error though it be, it is an error wrought with consummate skill. What, for example, could more vividly enhance our impression of the unknown horror enacted than the deep and enduring gloom of Haredale, than the idiot's inborn awe of blood, or, especially, than the expression of countenance so imaginatively attributed to Mrs. Rudge, "the capacity for expressing terror—something only dimly seen, but never absent for a moment,—the shadow of some look to which an instant of intense and most unutterable horror only could have given rise"?

But it is a condition of the human fancy that the promises of such words are irredeemable. In the notice before mentioned we thus spoke upon this topic:

"This is a conception admirably adapted to whet curiosity in respect to the character of that event which is hinted at as forming the basis of the story. But this observation should not fail to be made, that the anticipation must surpass the reality; that no matter how terrific be the circumstances which, in the *dénouement*, shall appear to have occasioned the expression of countenance worn habitually by Mrs. Rudge, still they will not be able to satisfy the mind of the reader. He will surely be disappointed. The skilful intimation of horror held out by the artist produces an effect which will deprive his conclusion of all. These intimations, these dark hints of some uncertain evil, are often rhetorically praised as effective, but are only justly so praised where there is no *dénouement* whatever; where the reader's imagination is left to clear up the mystery for itself; and this is not the design of Mr. Dickens."

And, in fact, our author was not long in seeing his precipitancy. He had placed himself in a dilemma from which even his high genius could not extricate him. He at once shifts the main interest, and in truth we do not see what better he could have done. The

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reader's attention becomes absorbed in the riots, and he fails to observe that what should have been the true catastrophe of the novel is exceedingly feeble and ineffective.

A few cursory remarks:—Mr. Dickens fails peculiarly in pure narration. See, for example, page 296, where the connection of Hugh and Chester is detailed by Varden. See also in *The Old Curiosity Shop* where, when the result is fully known, so many words are occupied in explaining the relationship of the brothers. The effect of the present narrative might have been materially increased by confining the action within the limits of London. The *Notre Dame* of Hugo affords a fine example of the force which can be gained by concentration, or unity of place. The unity of time is also sadly neglected, to no purpose, in *Barnaby Rudge*. That Rudge should so long and so deeply feel the sting of conscience is inconsistent with his brutality. On page 15, the interval elapsing between the murder and Rudge's return is variously stated at twenty-two and twenty-four years. It may be asked why the inmates of The Warren failed to hear the alarm-bell which was heard by Solomon Daisy. The idea of persecution by being tracked, as by blood-hounds, from one spot of quietude to another, is a favorite one with Mr. Dickens. Its effect cannot be denied. The stain upon Barnaby's wrist, caused by fright in the mother at so late a period of gestation

as one day before mature parturition, is shockingly at war with all medical experience. When Rudge, escaped from prison, unshackled, with money at command, is in agony at his wife's refusal to perjure herself for his salvation, is it not queer that he should demand any other salvation than lay in his heels?

Some of the conclusions of chapters—see pages 40 and 100—seem to have been written for the mere purpose of illustrating tail-pieces.

The leading idiosyncrasy of Mr. Dickens's remarkable humor is to be found in his translating the language of gesture, or action, or tone. For example:

“The cronies nodded to each other, and Mr. Parkes remarked in an undertone, shaking his head meanwhile, as who should say ‘Let no man contradict me, for I won’t believe him,’ that Willet was in amazing force to-night.”

The riots form a series of vivid pictures never surpassed. At page 17, the road between London and the Maypole is described as a horribly rough and dangerous, and at page 97, as an uncommonly smooth and convenient one. At page 116, how comes Chester in possession of the key of Mr. Rudge’s vacated house?

Mr. Dickens’s English is usually pure. His most remarkable error is that of employing the adverb “directly” in the sense of “as soon as.” For ex-

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ample, "Directly he arrived, Rudge said," etc. Bulwer is uniformly guilty of the same blunder.

It is observable that so original a stylist as our author should occasionally lapse into a gross imitation of what, itself, is a gross imitation. We mean the manner of Lamb—a manner based in the Latin construction. For example:

"In summer-time its pumps suggest to thirsty idlers springs cooler and more sparkling and deeper than other wells; and as they trace the spillings of full pitchers on the heated ground they snuff the freshness, and, sighing, cast sad looks toward the Thames and think of baths and boats, and saunter on, despondent."

The woodcut designs which accompany the edition before us are occasionally good. The copper engravings are pitifully ill-conceived and ill-drawn; and not only this, but in broad contradiction of the wood-designs and text.

There are many coincidences wrought into the narrative—those, for example, which relate to the nineteenth of March; the dream of Barnaby respecting his father at the very period when his father is actually in the house; and the dream of Haredale previous to his final meeting with Chester. These things are meant to insinuate a fatality which, very properly, is not expressed in plain terms, but it is questionable whether

the story derives more in ideality from their introduction than it might have gained of verisimilitude from their omission.

The *dramatis personæ* sustain the high fame of Mr. Dickens as a delineator of character. Miggs, the disconsolate handmaiden of Varden; Tappertit, his chivalrous apprentice; Mrs. Varden herself; and Dennis, a hangman, may be regarded as original caricatures of the highest merit as such. Their traits are founded in acute observation of nature, but are exaggerated to the utmost admissible extent. Miss Haredale and Edward Chester are commonplaces; no effort has been made in their behalf. Joe Willet is a naturally drawn country youth. Stagg is a mere makeweight Gashford and Gordon are truthfully copied. Dolly Varden is truth itself. Haredale, Rudge, and Mrs. Rudge are impressive only through the circumstances which surround them. Sir John Chester is, of course, not original, but is a vast improvement upon all his predecessors; his heartlessness is rendered somewhat too amusing, and his end too much that of a man of honor. Hugh is a noble conception. His fierce exultation in his animal powers; his subserviency to the smooth Chester; his mirthful contempt and patronage of Tappertit, and his brutal yet firm courage in the hour of death, form a picture to be set in diamonds. Old Willet is not surpassed by any character even among those of Dickens. He is nature itself, yet a step further

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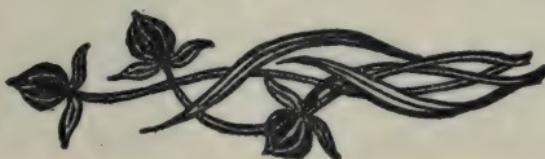
would have placed him in the class of caricatures. His combined conceit and obtusity are indescribably droll, and his peculiar misdirected energy when aroused is one of the most exquisite touches in all humorous painting. We shall never forget how heartily we laughed at his shaking Solomon Daisy and threatening to put him behind the fire, because the unfortunate little man was too much frightened to articulate. Varden is one of those free, jovial, honest fellows, at charity with all mankind, whom our author is so fond of depict'ng. And, lastly, Barnaby, the hero of the tale,—in him we have been somewhat disappointed. We have already said that his delight in the atrocities of the rebellion is at variance with his horror of blood. But this horror of blood is inconsequential; and of this we complain. Strongly insisted upon in the beginning of the narrative, it produces no adequate result. And here how fine an opportunity has Mr. Dickens missed! The conviction of the assassin, after the lapse of twenty-two years, might easily have been brought about through his son's mysterious awe of blood, an awe created in the unborn by the assassination itself, and this would have been one of the finest possible embodiments of the idea which we are accustomed to attach to "poetical justice." The raven, too, intensely amusing as it is, might have been made, more than we now see it, a portion of the conception of the fantastic Barnaby. Its croakings might have been

prophetically heard in the course of the drama. Its character might have performed, in regard to that of the idiot, much the same part as does, in music, the accompaniment in respect to the air. Each might have been distinct. Each might have differed remarkably from the other. Yet between them there might have been wrought an analogical resemblance, and although each might have existed apart, they might have formed together a whole which would have been imperfect in the absence of either.

From what we have here said, and, perhaps, said without due deliberation (for, alas! the hurried duties of the journalist preclude it), there will not be wanting those who will accuse us of a mad design to detract from the pure fame of the novelist. But to such we merely say in the language of heraldry, "Ye should wear a plain point sanguine in your arms." If this be understood, well; if not, well again. There lives no man feeling a deeper reverence for genius than ourself. If we have not dwelt so especially upon the high merits as upon the trivial defects of *Barnaby Rudge* we have already given our reasons for the omission, and these reasons will be sufficiently understood by all whom we care to understand them. The work before us is not, we think, equal to the tale which preceded it; but there are few, very few others, to which we consider it inferior. Our chief objection has not, perhaps, been so distinctly stated as we could wish.

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That this fiction, or indeed that any fiction written by Mr. Dickens, should be based in the excitement and maintenance of curiosity, we look upon as a misconception, on the part of the writer, of his own very great yet very peculiar powers. He has done this thing well, to be sure;—he would do any thing well in comparison with the herd of his contemporaries; but he has not done it so thoroughly well as his high and just reputation would demand. We think that the whole book has been an effort to him, solely through the nature of its design. He has been smitten with an untimely desire for a novel path. The idiosyncrasy of his intellect would lead him, naturally, into the most fluent and simple style of narration. In tales of ordinary sequence he may and will long reign triumphant. He has a talent for all things, but no positive genius for adaptation, and still less for that metaphysical art in which the souls of all mysteries lie. *Caleb Williams* is a far less noble work than *The Old Curiosity Shop*; but Mr. Dickens could no more have constructed the one than Mr. Godwin could have dreamed of the other.





Cornelius Mathews¹

WAKONDAH is the composition of Mr. Cornelius Mathews, one of the editors of the monthly magazine *Arcturus*. In the December number of the journal the poem was originally set forth by its author, very much "avec l'air d'un homme qui sauve sa patrie." To be sure, it was not what is usually termed the "leading" article of the month. It did not occupy that post of honor which, hitherto, has been so modestly filled by *Puffer Hopkins*. But it took precedence of some exceedingly beautiful stanzas by Professor Longfellow, and stood second only to a very serious account of a supper which, however well it might have suited the taste of an Ariel, would scarcely have feasted the Anakim, or satisfied the appetite of a Grandgousier. The supper was, or might have been, a good thing. The poem which succeeded it is not; nor can we imagine what has in-

¹ *Wakondah: The Master of Life.* A Poem. New York: George L. Curry & Co.

duced Messrs. Curry & Co. to be at the trouble of its republication. We are vexed with these gentlemen for having thrust this affair the second time before us. They have placed us in a predicament we dislike. In the pages of *Arcturus* the poem did not come necessarily under the eye of the magazine critic. There is a tacitly understood courtesy about these matters, a courtesy upon which we need not comment. The contributed papers in any one journal of the class of *Arcturus* are not considered as debatable by any one other. General propositions, under the editorial head, are rightly made the subject of discussion; but in speaking of *Wakondah*, for example, in the pages of our own magazine, we should have felt as if making an occasion. Now, upon our first perusal of the poem in question, we were both astonished and grieved that we could say, honestly, very little in its praise:—astonished, for by some means, not now just altogether intelligible to ourselves, we had become imbued with the idea of high poetical talent in Mr. Mathews; grieved, because, under the circumstances of his position as editor of one of the very best journals in the country, we had been sincerely anxious to think well of his abilities. Moreover, we felt that to speak ill of them, under any circumstances whatever, would be to subject ourselves to the charge of envy or jealousy on the part of those who do not personally know us. We therefore rejoiced that *Wakondah* was not a topic we

were called upon to discuss. But the poem is republished and placed upon our table, and these very "circumstances of position" which restrained us in the first place render it a positive duty that we speak distinctly in the second.

And very distinctly shall we speak. In fact, this effusion is a dilemma whose horns goad us into frankness and candor: "C'est un malheur," to use the words of Victor Hugo, "d'où on ne pourrait se tirer par des périphrases, par des quemadmodums, et des verumenimveros." If we mention it at all, we are forced to employ the language of that region where, as Addison has it, "they sell the best fish and speak the plainest English." *Wakondah*, then, from beginning to end, is trash. With the trivial exception which we shall designate, it has no merit whatever; while its faults, more numerous than the leaves of Vallombrosa, are of that rampant class which, if any schoolboy could be found so uninformed as to commit them, any schoolboy should be remorselessly flogged for committing.

The story, or, as the epics have it, the argument, although brief, is by no means particularly easy of comprehension. The design seems to be based upon a passage in Mr. Irving's *Astoria*. He tells us that the Indians who inhabit the Chippewyan range of mountains call it the "Crest of the World," and "think that Wakondah, or the 'Master of Life,' as they desig-

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nate the Supreme Being, has his residence among these aërial heights." Upon this hint Mr. Mathews has proceeded. He introduces us to Wakondah standing in person upon a mountain-top. He describes his appearance and thinks that a Chinook would be frightened to behold it. He causes the Master of Life to make a speech, which is addressed, generally, to things at large, and particularly to the neighboring woods, cataracts, rivers, pinnacles, steeps, and lakes, not to mention an earthquake. But all these (and, we think, judiciously) turn a deaf ear to the oration, which, to be plain, is scarcely equal to a second-rate Piankitank stump speech. In fact, it is a barefaced attempt at animal magnetism, and the mountains, etc., do no more than show its potency in resigning themselves to sleep as they do.

Then shone Wakondah's dreadful eyes; then he becomes very indignant, and accordingly launches forth into speech the second, with which the delinquents are afflicted, with occasional interruptions from the poet in proper person, until the conclusion of the poem.

The subject of the orations we shall be permitted to sum up compendiously in the one term, "rigmarole." But we do not mean to say that our compendium is not an improvement, and a very considerable one, upon the speeches themselves, which, taken altogether, are

the queerest and the most rhetorical, not to say the most miscellaneous orations we ever remember to have listened to outside of an Arkansas House of Delegates. In saying this we mean what we say. We intend no joke. Were it possible we would quote the whole poem in support of our opinion. But as this is not possible, and, moreover, as we presume Mr. Mathews has not been so negligent as to omit securing his valuable property by a copyright, we must be contented with a few extracts here and there at random, with a few comments equally so. But we have already hinted that there were really one or two words to be said of this effusion in the way of commendation, and these one or two words might as well be said now as hereafter. The poem thus commences:

The moon ascends the vaulted sky to-night;
With a slow motion full of pomp ascends;
But, mightier than the moon that o'er it bends,
A form is dwelling on the mountain height
That boldly intercepts the struggling light
With darkness nobler than the planet's fire,—
A gloom and dreadful grandeur that aspire
To match the cheerful heaven's far-shining might.

If we were to shut our eyes to the repetition of "might" (which, in its various inflections, is a pet word with our author, and lugged in upon all occasions), and to the obvious imitation of Longfellow's *Hymn to the Night*, in the second line of this stanza,

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we should be justified in calling it good. The "darkness nobler than the planet's fire" is certainly good. The general conception of the colossal figure on the mountain summit, relieved against the full moon, would be unquestionably grand were it not for the bullish phraseology by which the conception is rendered, in a great measure, abortive. The moon is described as "ascending," and its "motion" is referred to, while we have the standing figure continuously intercepting its light. That the orb would soon pass from behind the figure is a physical fact which the purpose of the poet requires to be left out of sight, and which scarcely any other language than that which he has actually employed would have succeeded in forcing upon the reader's attention. With all these defects, however, the passage, especially as an opening passage, is one of high merit. Looking carefully for something else to be commended, we find at length the lines,

Lo! where our foe up through these vales ascends,
Fresh from the embraces of the swelling sea,
A glorious, white and shining Deity.
Upon our strength his deep blue eye he bends,
With threatenings full of thought and steadfast ends;
While desolation from his nostril breathes
His glittering rage he scornfully unsheathes
And to the startled air its splendor lends.

This again, however, is worth only qualified com-

mendation. The first six lines preserve the personification (that of a ship) sufficiently well; but, in the seventh and eighth, the author suffers the image to slide into that of a warrior unsheathing his sword. Still there is force in these concluding verses, and we begin to fancy that this is saying a very great deal for the author of *Puffer Hopkins*.

The best stanza in the poem (there are thirty-four in all) is the thirty-third:

No cloud was on the moon, yet on his brow
A deepening shadow fell, and on his knees
That shook like tempest-stricken mountain trees,
His heavy head descended, sad and low,
Like a high city smitten by the blow,
Which secret earthquakes strike and toppling falls
With all its arches, towers, and cathedrals
In swift and unconjectured overthrow.

This is, positively, not bad. The first line italicized is bold and vigorous, both in thought and expression; and the four last, although by no means original, convey a striking picture. But then the whole idea, in its general want of keeping, is preposterous. What is more absurd than the conception of a man's head descending to his knees, as here described,—the thing could not be done by an Indian juggler or a man of gum-caoutchouc,—and what is more inappropriate than the resemblance attempted to be drawn between a single head descending and the innumerable pin-

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nacles of a fallen city? It is difficult to understand, *en passant*, why Mr. Mathews has thought proper to give "cathedrals" a quantity which does not belong to it, or to write "unconjectured" when the rhythm might have been fulfilled by "unexpected," and when "unexpected" would have fully conveyed the meaning which "unconjectured" does not.

By dint of further microscopic survey we are enabled to point out one, and, alas! only one more good line in the poem:

Green dells that into silence stretch away

contains a richly poetical thought, melodiously embodied. We only refrain, however, from declaring flatly that the line is not the property of Mr. Mathews, because we have not at hand the volume from which we believe it to be stolen. We quote the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth stanzas in full. They will serve to convey some faint idea of the general poem. The italics are our own.

The Spirit lowers and speaks: "Tremble ye wild Woods!"

Ye Cataracts! your organ-voices sound!

Deep Crags, in earth by massy tenures bound,
Oh, Earthquake, *level flat!* The peace that broods
Above this world, and steadfastly eludes

Your power, howl, Winds and break; the peace that mocks
Dismay 'mid silent streams and voiceless rocks,
Through wilderness, cliffs, and solitudes.

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" Night-shadowed Rivers, lift your dusky hands
And clap them harshly *with a sullen roar!*
Ye thousand Pinnacles and Steeps deplore
The glory that departs! above *you* stands,
Ye Lakes with azure waves and snowy strands,
A power that utters forth his loud behest
Till mountain, lake, and river shall attest,
The puissance of a Master's *large commands.*"

So spake the Spirit with a wide-cast look
Of bounteous power and *cheerful* majesty;
As if he caught a sight of either sea
And all the subject realm between: then shook
His brandished arms; his stature scarce could brook
Its confine; *swelling wide, it seemed to grow*
As grows a cedar on a mountain's brow
By the mad air in ruffling breezes *took!*

The woods are deaf and will not be aroused,
The mountains are asleep, they hear him not,
Nor from deep-founded silence can be wrought,
Though herded bison on their steeps have browsed;
Beneath their banks in *darksome stillness* housed
The rivers loiter like a calm-bound sea;
In anchored nuptials to dumb apathy
Cliff, wilderness, and solitude are spoused.

Let us endeavor to translate this gibberish, by way of ascertaining its import, if possible. Or, rather, let us state the stanzas in substance. The Spirit lowers, that is to say, grows angry, and speaks. He calls upon the wild woods to tremble and upon the cataracts to sound their voices which have the tone of an organ.

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He addresses, then, an earthquake, or perhaps earthquake in general, and requests it to level flat all the deep crags which are bound by massy tenures in earth—a request, by the way, which any sensible earthquake must have regarded as tautological, since it is difficult to level anything otherwise than flat: Mr. Mathews, however, is no doubt the best judge of flatness in the abstract, and may have peculiar ideas respecting it. But to proceed with the Spirit. Turning to the winds he enjoins them to howl and break the peace that broods over this world and steadfastly eludes their power—the same peace that mocks dismay 'mid streams, rocks, et cetera. He now speaks to the night-shadowed rivers, and commands them to lift their dusky hands and clap them harshly with a sullen roar; and as roaring with one's hands is not the easiest matter in the world, we can only conclude that the rivers here reluctantly disobeyed the injunction. Nothing daunted, however, the Spirit, addressing a thousand pinnacles and steeps, desires them to deplore the glory that departs, or is departing; and we can almost fancy that we see the pinnacles deplored upon the spot. The lakes, at least such of them as possess azure waves and snowy strands, then come in for their share of the oration. They are called upon to observe, to take notice, that above them stands no ordinary character, no Piankitank stump orator, or anything of that sort, but a power,—a power, in

short, to use the exact words of Mr. Mathews, "that utters forth his loud behest, till mountain, lake, and river shall attest the puissance of a Master's large commands." "Utters forth" is no doubt somewhat supererogatory, since "to utter" is of itself to emit, or send forth; but as "the Power" appears to be somewhat excited he should be forgiven such mere errors of speech. We cannot, however, pass over his boast about uttering forth his loud behest till mountain, lake, and river shall obey him, for the fact is that his threat is *vox et præterea nihil*, like the countryman's nightingale in *Catullus*; the issue showing that the mountains, lakes, and rivers—all very sensible creatures—go fast asleep upon the spot, and pay no attention to his rigmarole whatever. Upon the "large commands" it is not our intention to dwell. The phrase is a singularly mercantile one to be in the mouth of "a Power." It is not impossible, however, that Mr. Mathews himself is

busy in the cotton trade
And sugar line.

But to resume. We were originally told that the Spirit "lowered" and spoke, and in truth his entire speech is a scold at creation; yet stanza the eighth is so forgetful as to say that he spoke "with a wide-cast look of bounteous power and cheerful majesty." Be this point as it may, he now shakes his brandished arms, and, swelling out, seems to grow

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As grows a cedar on a mountain's top—
By the mad air in ruffling breezes took,

or as swells the turkey-gobbler, whose image the poet unquestionably had in his mind's eye when he penned the words about the ruffled cedar. As for "took" instead of "taken," why not say "tuk" at once? We have heard of chaps "vot vas tuk up" for sheep-stealing, and we know of one or two that ought to be "tuk up" for murder of the Queen's English.

We shall never get on. Stanza the ninth assures us that the woods are deaf and will not be aroused, that the mountains are asleep, and so forth, all which Mr. Mathews might have anticipated. But the rest he could not have foreseen. He could not have foreknown that "the rivers, housed beneath their banks in darksome stillness," would "loiter like a calm-bound sea," and still less could he have been aware, unless informed of the fact, that "cliff, wilderness, and solitude would be spoused in anchored nuptials to dumb apathy!" Good heavens, no! nobody could have anticipated that! Now, Mr. Mathews, we put it to you as a man of veracity—what does it all mean?

As when in times to startle and revere.

This line, of course, is an accident on the part of our author. At the time of writing it he could not have remembered

To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

Here is another accident of imitation; for, seriously, we do not mean to assert that it is anything more:

I urged the dark red hunter in his quest
Of pard or panther with a gloomy zest;
And while through darkling woods they swiftly fare,
Two seeming creatures of the oak-shadowed air,
I sped the game and fired the follower's breast.

The line italicized we have seen quoted by some of our daily critics as beautiful; and so, barring the "oak-shadowed air," it is. In the meantime Campbell, in *Gertrude of Wyoming*, has the words

the hunter and the deer a shade.

Campbell stole the idea from our own Freneau, who has the line

The hunter and the deer a shade.

Between the two, Mr. Mathews's claim to originality, at this point, will, very possibly, fall to the ground.

It appears to us that the author of *Wakondah* is either very innocent or very original about matters of versification. His stanza is an ordinary one. If we are not mistaken, it is that employed by Campbell in his *Gertrude of Wyoming*, a favorite poem of our author's. At all events it is composed of pentameters whose rhymes alternate by a simple and fixed rule. But our poet's deviations from this rule are so many and so unusually picturesque that we scarcely know

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what to think of them. Sometimes he introduces an Alexandrine at the close of a stanza; and here we have no right to quarrel with him. It is not usual in this metre; but still he may do it if he pleases. To put an Alexandrine in the middle, or at the beginning, of one of these stanzas is droll, to say no more. See stanza third, which commences with the verse

Upon his brow a garland of the woods he wears,

and stanza twenty-eight, where the last line but one is

And rivers singing all aloud tho' still unseen.

Stanza the seventh begins thus:

The Spirit lowers and speaks: " Tremble ye wild Woods!"

Here it must be observed that " wild Woods " is not meant for a double rhyme. If scanned on the fingers (and we presume Mr. Mathews is in the practice of scanning thus) the line is a legitimate Alexandrine. Nevertheless, it cannot be read. It is like nothing under the sun, except, perhaps, Sir Philip Sidney's attempt at English hexameter in his *Arcadia*. Some one or two of his verses we remember. For example:

So to the | wood Love | runs as | well as | rides to the | palace;
Neither he | bears reve | rence to a | prince nor | pity to a |
beggar,

But like a | point in the | midst of a | circle is | still of a | near-
ness.

With the aid of an additional spondee or dactyl Mr. Mathews's very odd verse might be scanned in the same manner, and would, in fact, be a legitimate hexameter:

The Spi | rit lowers | and speaks | “ Tremble ye | wild Woods.”

Sometimes our poet takes even a higher flight and drops a foot, or a half-foot, or, for the matter of that, a foot and a half. Here, for example, is a very singular verse to be introduced in a pentameter rhythm:

Then shone Wakondah's dreadful eyes.

Here another:

Yon full-orbed fire shall cease to shine.

Here, again, are lines in which the rhythm demands an accent on impossible syllables:

But ah! winged *with* what agonies and pangs . . .
Swiftly before me *nor* care I how vast . . .
I see *visions* denied to mortal eyes . . .
Uplifted longer *in* heaven's western glow . . .

But these are trifles. Mr. Mathews is young, and we take it for granted that he will improve. In the meantime what does he mean by spelling “lose” *loose*, and “its” (the possessive pronoun) *it's*—reiterated instances of which fashions are to be found *passim* in *Wakondah*? What does he mean by writing “dare,” the present, for “dared,” the perfect?—see stanza the

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twelfth. And, as we are now in the catechetical vein, we may as well conclude our dissertation at once with a few other similar queries.

What do you mean, then, Mr. Mathews, by

A sudden silence like a tempest fell ?

What do you mean by a "quivered stream" ; "a shapeless gloom" ; a "habitable wish" ; "natural blood" ; "oak-shadowed air" ; "customary peers," and "thunderous noises" ?

What do you mean by

A sorrow mightier than the midnight skies ?

What do you mean by

A bulk that swallows up the sea-blue sky ?

Are you not aware that calling the sky as blue as the sea is like saying of the snow that it is as white as a sheet of paper ?

What do you mean, in short, by

Its feathers darker than a thousand fears ?

Is not this something like "blacker than a dozen and a half of chimney-sweeps and a stack of black cats," and are not the whole of these illustrative observations of yours somewhat upon the plan of that of the witness who described a certain article stolen as

being of the size and shape of a bit of chalk? What do you mean by them, we say?

And here, notwithstanding our earnest wish to satisfy the author of *Wakondah*, it is indispensable that we bring our notice of the poem to a close. We feel grieved that our observations have been so much at random; but at random, after all, is it alone possible to convey either the letter or the spirit of that which, a mere jumble of incongruous nonsense, has neither beginning, middle, nor end. We should be delighted to proceed, but how? to applaud, but what? Surely not this trumpery declamation, this maudlin sentiment, this metaphor run mad, this twaddling verbiage, this halting and doggerel rhythm, this unintelligible rant and cant! "Slid! if these be your passados and montantes, we 'll have none of them." Mr. Mathews, you have clearly mistaken your vocation, and your effusion as little deserves the title of poem (oh, sacred name!) as did the rocks of the royal forest of Fontainebleau that of "*mes déserts*" bestowed upon them by Francis the First. In bidding you adieu we commend to your careful consideration the remark of M. Timon, "que le Ministre de l'Instruction Publique doit lui-même savoir parler Français."





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MONG all the pioneers of American literature, whether prose or poetical, there is not one whose productions have not been much overrated by his countrymen. But this fact is more especially obvious in respect to such of these pioneers as are no longer living; nor is it a fact of so deeply transcendental a nature as only to be accounted for by the Emersons and Alcotts. In the first place, we have but to consider that gratitude, surprise, and a species of hyperpatriotic triumph have been blended and finally confounded with mere admiration, or appreciation, in respect to the labors of our earlier writers; and, in the second place, that Death has thrown his customary veil of the sacred over these commingled feelings, forbidding them, in a measure, to be now separated or subjected to analysis. "In speaking of the deceased," says that excellent old English moralist, James Puckle, in his *Gray Cap for a Green Head*, "so fold up your discourse that their virtues may be outwardly shown, while their vices are

wrapped up in silence." And with somewhat too inconsiderate a promptitude have we followed the spirit of this quaint advice. The mass of American readers have been, hitherto, in no frame of mind to view with calmness and to discuss with discrimination the true claims of the few who were first in convincing the mother country that her sons were not all brainless, as, in the plenitude of her arrogance, she, at one period, half affected and half wished to believe; and where any of these few have departed from among us the difficulty of bringing their pretensions to the test of a proper criticism has been enhanced in a very remarkable degree. But even as concerns the living: is there any one so blind as not to see that Mr. Cooper, for example, owes much, and that Mr. Paulding owes all, of his reputation as a novelist to his early occupation of the field? Is there any one so dull as not to know that fictions which neither Mr. Paulding nor Mr. Cooper could have written are daily published by native authors without attracting more of commendation than can be crammed into a hack newspaper paragraph? And, again, is there any one so prejudiced as not to acknowledge that all this is because there is no longer reason or wit in the query, "Who reads an American book?" It is not because we lack the talent in which the days of Mr. Paulding exulted, but because such talent has shown itself to be common. It is not because we have no Mr. Coopers,

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but because it has been demonstrated that we might, at any moment, have as many Mr. Coopers as we please. In fact, we are now strong in our own resources. We have at length arrived at that epoch when our literature may and must stand on its own merits, or fall through its own defects. We have snapped asunder the leading-strings of our British grandmamma, and, better still, we have survived the first hours of our novel freedom,—the first licentious hours of a hobbledehoy braggadocio and swagger. At last, then, we are in a condition to be criticised—even more, to be neglected; and the journalist is no longer in danger of being impeached for *lèse majesté* of the Democratic Spirit, who shall assert, with sufficient humility, that we have committed an error in mistaking Kettell's *Specimens* for the Pentateuch, or Joseph Rodman Drake for Apollo.

The case of this latter gentleman is one which well illustrates what we have been saying. We believe it was about 1835 that Mr. Dearborn republished the *Culprit Fay*, which then, as at the period of its original issue, was belauded by the universal American press in a manner which must have appeared ludicrous, not to speak very plainly, in the eyes of all unprejudiced observers. With a curiosity much excited by comments at once so grandiloquent and so general, we procured and read the poem. What we found it we ventured to express distinctly, and at some length, in the

pages of *The Southern Messenger*. It is a well-versified and sufficiently fluent composition without high merit of any kind. Its defects are gross and superabundant. Its plot and conduct, considered in reference to its scene, are absurd. Its originality is none at all. Its imagination (and this was the great feature insisted upon by its admirers) is but a "counterfeit presentment," but the shadow of the shade of that lofty quality which is, in fact, the soul of the poetic sentiment, but a drivelling effort to be fanciful, an effort resulting in a species of hop-skip-and-go-merry rhodomontade, which the uninitiated feel it a duty to call ideality, and to admire as such, while lost in surprise at the impossibility of performing at least the latter half of the duty with anything like satisfaction to themselves. And all this we not only asserted, but without difficulty proved. Dr. Drake has written some beautiful poems, but the *Culprit Fay* is not of them. We neither expected to hear any dissent from our opinions, nor did we hear any. On the contrary, the approving voice of every critic in the country whose dictum we had been accustomed to respect was to us a sufficient assurance that we had not been very grossly in the wrong. In fact, the public taste was then approaching the right. The truth indeed had not, as yet, made itself heard; but we had reached a point at which it had but to be plainly and boldly put, to be, at least tacitly, admitted.

This habit of apotheosizing our literary pioneers was

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a most indiscriminating one. Upon all who wrote, the applause was plastered with an impartiality really refreshing. Of course, the system favored the dunces at the expense of true merit; and, since there existed a certain fixed standard of exaggerated commendation, to which all were adapted after the fashion of Procrustes, it is clear that the most meritorious required the least stretching,—in other words, that although all were much overrated, the deserving were overrated in a less degree than the unworthy. Thus with Brainard, a man of indisputable genius, who, in any more discriminate system of panegyric, would have been long ago bepuffed into demi-deism; for if *M'Fingal*, for example, is in reality what we have been told, the commentators upon Trumbull, as a matter of the simplest consistency, should have exalted into the seventh heaven of poetical dominion the author of the many graceful and vigorous effusions which are now lying in a very neat little volume before us.¹

Yet we maintain that even these effusions have been overpraised, and materially so. It is not that Brainard has not written poems which may rank with those of any American, with the single exception of Longfellow; but that the general merit of our whole national Muse has been estimated too highly, and that the author of *The Connecticut River* has, individually,

¹ *The Poems of John G. C. Brainard. A New and Authentic Collection, with an Original Memoir of his Life.* Hartford: Edward Hopkins.

shared in the exaggeration. No poet among us has composed what would deserve the tithe of that amount of approbation so innocently lavished upon Brainard. But it would not suit our purpose just now to enter into any elaborate analysis of his productions. It so happens, however, that we open the book at a brief poem, an examination of which will stand us in good stead of this general analysis, since it is by this very poem that the admirers of its author are content to swear, since it is the fashion to cite it as his best, since thus, in short, it is the chief basis of his notoriety, if not the surest triumph of his fame.

We allude to *The Fall of Niagara*, and shall be pardoned for quoting it in full:

The thoughts are strange that crowd into my brain
While I look upward to thee. It would seem
As if God poured thee from His hollow hand,
And hung His bow upon thy awful front,
And spoke in that loud voice which seemed to him
Who dwelt in Patmos for his Saviour's sake
The "sound of many waters"; and had bade
Thy flood to chronicle the ages back,
And notch his centuries in the eternal rocks.

Deep calleth unto deep. And what are we
That hear the question of that voice sublime ?
Oh, what are all the notes that ever rung
From war's vain trumpet, by thy thundering side ?
Yea, what is all the riot man can make
In his short life to thy unceasing roar ?

J. G. C. Brainard

And yet, bold babbler, what art thou to Him
Who drowned the world and heaped the waters far
Above its loftiest mountains ?—a light wave
That breaks and whispers of its Maker's might.

It is a very usual thing to hear these verses called not merely the best of their author, but the best which have been written on the subject of Niagara. Its positive merit appears to us only partial. We have been informed that the poet had seen the great cataract before writing the lines; but the Memoir prefixed to the present edition denies what, for our own part, we never believed, for Brainard was truly a poet; and no poet could have looked upon Niagara, in the substance, and written thus about it.

If he saw it at all, it must have been in fancy, “at a distance”—*ἐκάσ*—as the lying Pindar says he saw Archilocus, who died ages before the villain was born.

To the two opening lines we have no objection; but it may be well observed, in passing, that had the mind of the poet been really “crowded with strange thoughts,” and not merely engaged in an endeavor to think, he would have entered at once upon the thoughts themselves, without allusion to the state of his brain. His subject would have left him no room for self.

The third line embodies an absurd and impossible, not to say a contemptible, image. We are called upon to conceive a similarity between the continuous downward sweep of Niagara and the momentary splashing

of some definite and, of course, trifling quantity of water from a hand; for, although it is the hand of the Deity Himself which is referred to, the mind is irresistibly led, by the words "poured from His hollow hand," to that idea which has been customarily attached to such phrase. It is needless to say, moreover, that the bestowing upon Deity a human form is at best a low and most unideal conception.¹ In fact the poet has committed the grossest of errors in likening the fall to any material object; for the human fancy can fashion nothing which shall not be inferior in majesty to the cataract itself. Thus bathos is inevitable; and there is no better exemplification of bathos than Mr. Brainard has here given.²

The fourth line but renders the matter worse, for here

¹ The Humanitarians held that God was to be understood as having really a human form.—See Clarke's *Sermons*, vol i., p. 26, fol. edit.

"The drift of Milton's argument leads him to employ language which would appear, at first sight, to verge upon their doctrine; but it will be seen immediately that he guards himself against the charge of having adopted one of the most ignorant errors of the dark ages of the church."—Dr. Summer's Notes on Milton's *Christian Doctrine*.

The opinion could never have been very general. Andens, a Syrian of Mesopotamia, who lived in the fourth century, was condemned for the doctrine, as heretical. His few disciples were called Anthropomorphites.—See Du Pin.

² It is remarkable that Drake, of whose *Culprit Fay* we have just spoken, is, perhaps, the sole poet who has employed, in the description of Niagara, imagery which does not produce a bathetic impression. In one of his minor poems he has these magnificent lines:

How sweet 't would be, when all the air
In moonlight swims, along thy river
To crouch upon the grass, and hear
Niagara's everlasting voice
Far in the deep blue west away,—

J. G. C. Brainard

the figure is most inartistically shifted. The handful of water becomes animate; for it has a front, that is, a forehead, and upon this forehead the Deity proceeds to hang a bow, that is, a rainbow. At the same time He "speaks in that loud voice," etc., and here it is obvious that the ideas of the writer are in a sad state of fluctuation; for he transfers the idiosyncrasy of the fall itself (that is to say, its sound) to the one who pours it from His hand. But, not content with all this, Mr. Brainard commands the flood to keep a kind of tally; for this is the low thought which the expression about "notching in the rocks" immediately and inevitably induces. The whole of this first division of the poem embraces, we hesitate not to say, one of the most jarring, inappropriate, mean, and in every way monstrous assemblages of false imagery which can be found out of the tragedies of Nat Lee, or the farces of Thomas Carlyle.

In the latter division the poet recovers himself, as if ashamed of his previous bombast. His natural instinct (for Brainard was no artist) has enabled him to feel that subjects which surpass in grandeur all efforts of the human imagination are well depicted only in the simplest and least metaphorical language,

That dreamy and poetic noise
We mark not in the glare of day;
Oh, how unlike its torrent-cry
When o'er the brink the tide is driven
As if the vast and sheeted sky
In thunder fell from heaven!

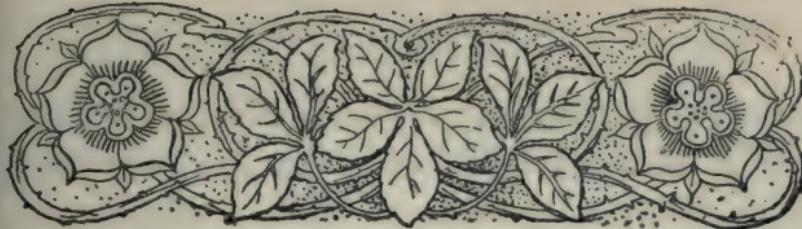
a proposition as susceptible of demonstration as any in Euclid. Accordingly we find a material sinking in tone; although he does not at once discard all imagery. The "deep calleth unto deep" is nevertheless, a great improvement upon his previous rhetoricianism. The personification of the waters above and below would be good in reference to any subject less august. The moral reflections which immediately follow have at least the merit of simplicity; but the poet exhibits no very lofty imagination when he bases these reflections only upon the cataract's superiority to man in the noise it can create; nor is the concluding idea more spirited, where the mere difference between the quantity of water which occasioned the flood and the quantity which Niagara precipitates, is made the measure of the Almighty Mind's superiority to that cataract which it called by a thought into existence.

But although *The Fall of Niagara* does not deserve all the unmeaning commendation it has received, there are, nevertheless, many truly beautiful poems in this collection, and even more certain evidences of poetic power. *To a Child, the Daughter of a Friend* is exceedingly graceful and terse. *To the Dead* has equal grace, with more vigor, and, moreover, a touching air of melancholy. Its melody is very rich, and in the monotonous repetition, at each stanza, of a certain rhyme, we recognize a fantastic yet true imagination. *Mr. Merry's Lament for Long Tom* would be worthy

of all praise were not its unusually beautiful rhythm an imitation from Campbell, who would deserve his high poetical rank if only for its construction. Of the merely humorous pieces we have little to say. Such things are not poetry. Mr. Brainard excelled in them, and they are very good in their place; but that place is not in a collection of poems. The prevalent notions upon this head are extremely vague; yet we see no reason why any ambiguity should exist. Humor, with an exception to be made hereafter, is directly antagonistical to that which is the soul of the Muse proper; and the omniprevalent belief that melancholy is inseparable from the higher manifestations of the beautiful is not without a firm basis in nature and in reason. But it so happens that humor and that quality which we have termed the soul of the Muse (imagination) are both essentially aided in their development by the same adventitious assistance—that of rhythm and of rhyme. Thus the only bond between humorous verse and poetry, properly so called, is that they employ, in common, a certain tool. But this single circumstance has been sufficient to occasion, and to maintain through long ages a confusion of two very distinct ideas in the brain of the unthinking critic. There is, nevertheless, an individual branch of humor which blends so happily with the ideal, that from the union result some of the finest effects of legitimate poesy. We allude to what is termed "archness," a trait with

which popular feeling, which is unfailingly poetic, has invested, for example, the whole character of the fairy. In the volume before us there is a brief composition entitled *The Tree Toad*, which will afford a fine exemplification of our idea. It seems to have been hurriedly constructed, as if its author had felt ashamed of his light labor. But that in his heart there was a secret exultation over these verses, for which his reason found it difficult to account, we know; and there is not a really imaginative man within sound of our voice to-day who, upon perusal of this little *Tree Toad*, will not admit it to be one of the truest poems ever written by Brainard.





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THE first point to be observed in the consideration of *Charles O'Malley* is the great popularity of the work. We believe that in this respect it has surpassed even the inimitable compositions of Mr. Dickens. At all events it has met with a most extensive sale; and, although the graver journals have avoided its discussion, the ephemeral press has been nearly if not quite unanimous in its praise. To be sure, the commendation, although unqualified, cannot be said to have abounded in specification, or to have been, in any regard, of a satisfactory character to one seeking precise ideas on the topic of the book's particular merit. It appears to us, in fact, that the cabalistical words "fun," "rollicking," and "devil-may-care," if, indeed, words they be, have been made to stand in good stead of all critical comment in the case of the work under review. We first

¹ *Charles O'Malley, the Irish Dragoon.* By Harry Lorrequer. With forty illustrations by Phiz. Complete in one volume. Carey & Hart: Philadelphia.

saw these dexterous expressions in a fly-leaf of *Opinions of the Press* appended to the renowned *Harry Lorrequer* by his publisher in Dublin. Thence transmitted, with complete echo, from critic to critic, through daily, weekly, and monthly journals without number, they have come at length to form a pendant and a portion of our author's celebrity; have come to be regarded as sufficient response to the few ignoramuses, who, obstinate as ignorant, and foolhardy as obstinate, venture to propound a question or two about the true claims of *Harry Lorrequer*, or the justice of the pretensions of *Charles O'Malley*.

We shall not insult our readers by supposing any one of them unaware of the fact that a book may be even exceedingly popular without any legitimate literary merit. This fact can be proven by numerous examples which, now and here, it will be unnecessary and perhaps indecorous to mention. The dogma, then, is absurdly false, that the popularity of a work is *prima facie* evidence of its excellence in some respects; that is to say, the dogma is false if we confine the meaning of excellence (as here, of course, it must be confined) to excellence in a literary sense. The truth is, that the popularity of a book is *prima facie* evidence of just the converse of the proposition; it is evidence of the book's demerit, inasmuch as it shows a "stooping to conquer," inasmuch as it shows that the author has dealt largely, if not altogether, in mat-

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ters which are susceptible of appreciation by the mass of mankind, by uneducated thought, by uncultivated taste, by unrefined and unguided passion. So long as the world retains its present point of civilization, so long will it be almost an axiom that no extensively popular book, in the right application of the term, can be a work of high merit, as regards those particulars of the work which are popular. A book may be readily sold, may be universally read, for the sake of some half or two thirds of its matter, which half or two thirds may be susceptible of popular appreciation, while the one half or one third remaining may be the delight of the highest intellect and genius, and absolute caviare to the rabble. And just as

Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci,

so will the writer of fiction, who looks most sagaciously to his own interest, combine all votes by intermingling with his loftier efforts such amount of less ethereal matter as will give general currency to his composition. And here we shall be pardoned for quoting some observations of the English artist, H. Howard. Speaking of the imitation, he says:

“The pleasure that results from it, even when employed upon the most ordinary materials, will always render that property of our art the most attractive with the majority, because it may be enjoyed with the least mental exertion. All men are in some degree judges

of it. The cobbler in his own line may criticise Apelles; and popular opinions are never to be wholly disregarded concerning that which is addressed to the public, who, to a certain extent, are generally right; although, as the language of the refined can never be intelligible to the uneducated, so the higher styles of art can never be acceptable to the multitude. In proportion as a work rises in the scale of intellect, it must necessarily become limited in the number of its admirers. For this reason the judicious artist, even in his loftiest efforts, will endeavor to introduce some of those qualities which are interesting to all, as a passport for those of a more intellectual character."

And these remarks upon painting, remarks which are mere truisms in themselves, embody nearly the whole rationale of the topic now under discussion. It may be added, however, that the skill with which the author addresses the lower taste of the populace is often a source of pleasure, because of admiration, to a taste higher and more refined, and may be made a point of comment and of commendation by the critic.

In our review of *Barnaby Rudge*, we were prevented, through want of space, from showing how Mr. Dickens had so well succeeded in uniting all suffrages. What we have just said, however, will suffice upon this point. While he has appealed, in innumerable regards, to the most exalted intellect, he has meanwhile invariably

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touched a certain string whose vibrations are omnipresent. We allude to his powers of imitation,—that species of imitation to which Mr. Howard has reference,—the faithful depicting of what is called still-life, and particularly of character in humble condition. It is his close observation and imitation of nature here which have rendered him popular, while his higher qualities, with the ingenuity evinced in addressing the general taste, have secured him the good word of the informed and intellectual.

But this is an important point upon which we desire to be distinctly understood. We wish here to record our positive dissent (be that dissent worth what it may) from a very usual opinion, the opinion that Mr. Dickens has done justice to his own genius, that any man ever failed to do grievous wrong to his own genius, in appealing to the public at all. As a matter of pecuniary policy alone is any such appeal defensible. But we speak, of course, in relation to fame—in regard to that

spur which the true spirit doth raise
To scorn delight and live laborious days.

That a perfume should be found by any “true spirit” in the incense of mere popular applause, is, to our own apprehension at least, a thing inconceivable, inappreciable, a paradox which gives the lie unto itself, a mystery more profound than the well of Democritus. Mr. Dickens has no more business with the rabble than

a seraph with a *chapeau de bras*. What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba? What is he to Jacques Bonhomme¹ or Jacques Bonhomme to him? The higher genius is a rare gift and divine. *'Απόλλων οὐ παντὶ φαείνεται: ὃς μιν ἰδῃ, μέγας οὗτος* (not to all men Apollo shows himself; he is alone great who beholds him.)² And his greatness has its office God-assigned. But that office is not a low communion with low, or even with ordinary, intellect. The holy, the electric spark of genius is the medium of intercourse between the noble and more noble mind. For lesser purposes there are humbler agents. There are puppets enough, able enough, willing enough, to perform in literature the little things to which we have had reference. For one Fouqué there are fifty Molières. For one Angelo there are five hundred Jan Steens. For one Dickens there are five million Smolletts, Fieldings, Marryats, Arthurs, Cocktons, Bogtons, and Frogtons.

It is, in brief, the duty of all whom circumstances have led into criticism—it is, at least, a duty from which we individually shall never shrink, to uphold the true dignity of genius, to combat its degradation, to plead for the exercise of its powers in those bright fields which are its legitimate and peculiar province, and which for it alone lie gloriously outspread.

But to return to *Charles O'Malley* and its popular-

¹ Nickname for the populace in the Middle Ages.

² Callimachus, *Hymn to Apollo*.

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ity. We have endeavored to show that this latter must not be considered in any degree as the measure of its merit, but should rather be understood as indicating a deficiency in this respect, when we bear in mind, as we should do, the highest aims of intellect in fiction. A slight examination of the work (for in truth it is worth no more) will sustain us in what we have said. The plot is exceedingly meagre. Charles O'Malley, the hero, is a young orphan Irishman, living in Galway County, Ireland, in the house of his uncle Godfrey, to whose sadly encumbered estates the youth is heir apparent and presumptive. He becomes enamored, while on a visit to a neighbor, of Miss Lucy Dashwood, and finds a rival in a Captain Hammersley. Some words carelessly spoken by Lucy inspire him with a desire for military renown. After sojourning, therefore, for a brief period at Dublin University, he obtains a commission and proceeds to the Peninsula with the British army under Wellington. Here he distinguishes himself, is promoted, and meets frequently with Miss Dashwood, whom obstinately, and in spite of the lady's own acknowledgment of love for himself, he supposes in love with Hammersley. Upon the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo he returns home, finds his uncle, of course, just dead, and sells his commission to disencumber the estate. Presently Napoleon escapes from Elba, and our hero, obtaining a staff appointment under Picton, returns to the Peninsula, is present at

Waterloo, where Hammersley is killed, saves the life of Lucy's father for the second time, as he has already twice saved that of Lucy herself, is rewarded by the hand of the latter, and, making his way back to O'Malley Castle, "lives happily all the rest of his days."

In and about this plot, if such it may be called, there are more absurdities than we have patience to enumerate. The author, or narrator, for example, is supposed to be Harry Lorrequer as far as the end of the preface, which, by the way, is one of the best portions of the book. O'Malley then tells his own story. But the publishing office of the *Dublin University Magazine*, in which the narrative originally appeared, having been burned down, there ensues a sad confusion of identity between O'Malley and Lorrequer, so that it is difficult, for the nonce, to say which is which. In the want of copy consequent upon the disaster, James, the novelist, comes in to the relief of Lorrequer, or perhaps of O'Malley, with one of the flattest and most irrelevant of love-tales. Meantime, in the story proper are repetitions without end. We have already said that the hero saves the life of his mistress twice, and of her father twice. But, not content with this, he has two mistresses, and saves the life of both at different periods, in precisely the same manner, that is to say, by causing his horse, in each instance, to perform a Munchausen side-leap at the moment when a spring forward would have impelled him upon his beloved.

And then we have one unending, undeviating succession of junketings, in which "devilled kidneys" are never by any accident found wanting. The unction and pertinacity with which the author discusses what he chooses to denominate "devilled kidneys" are indeed edifying, to say no more. The truth is, that drinking, telling anecdotes, and devouring "devilled kidneys" may be considered as the sum total, as the thesis of the book. Never in the whole course of his eventful life does Mr. O'Malley get "two or three assembled together" without seducing them forthwith to a table, and placing before them a dozen of wine and a dish of "devilled kidneys." This accomplished, the parties begin what seems to be the business of the author's existence, the narration of unusually broad tales, like those of the Southdown mutton. And here, in fact, we have the plan of that whole work of which the *United Service Gazette* has been pleased to vow it "would rather be the author than of all the 'Pickwicks' and 'Nicklebys' in the world," a sentiment which we really blush to say has been echoed by many respectable members of our own press. The general plot or narrative is a mere thread upon which after-dinner anecdotes, some good, some bad, some utterly worthless, and not one truly original, are strung with about as much method, and about half as much dexterity, as we see ragged urchins employ in stringing the kernels of nuts.

It would, indeed, be difficult to convey to one who has not examined this production for himself any idea of the exceedingly rough, clumsy, and inartistical manner in which even this bald conception is carried out. The stories are absolutely dragged in by the ears. So far from finding them result naturally or plausibly from the conversation of the interlocutors, even the blindest reader may perceive the author's struggling and blundering effort to introduce them. It is rendered quite evident that they were originally "on hand," and that "O'Malley" has been concocted for their introduction. Among other *naisseries* we observe the silly trick of whetting appetite by delay. The conversation over the "kidneys" is brought, for example, to such a pass that one of the speakers is called upon for a story, which he forthwith declines for any reason, or for none. At a subsequent "broil" he is again pressed, and again refuses, and it is not until the reader's patience is fairly exhausted, and he has consigned both the story and its author to Hades, that the gentleman in question is prevailed upon to discourse. The only conceivable result of this *fan-faronnade* is the ruin of the tale when told, through exaggerating anticipation respecting it.

The anecdotes thus narrated being the staple of the book, and the awkward manner of their interlocution having been pointed out, it but remains to be seen what the anecdotes are, in themselves, and what is

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the merit of their narration. And here, let it not be supposed that we have any design to deprive the devil of his due. There are several very excellent anecdotes in *Charles O'Malley* very cleverly and pungently told. Many of the scenes in which Monsoon figures are rich—less, however, from the scenes themselves than from the piquant, but by no means original, character of Monsoon, a drunken, maudlin, dishonest old Major, given to communicativeness and mock morality over his cups, and not overcareful in detailing adventures which tell against himself. One or two of the college pictures are unquestionably good, but might have been better. In general, the reader is made to feel that fine subjects have fallen into unskilful hands. By way of instancing this assertion, and at the same time of conveying an idea of the tone and character of the stories, we will quote one of the shortest, and assuredly one of the best:

“ ‘ Ah, by-the-by, how’s the Major ? ’

“ ‘ Charmingly; only a little bit in a scrape just now. Sir Arthur—Lord Wellington, I mean—had him up for his fellows being caught pillaging, and gave him a devil of a rowing a few days ago.’

“ ‘ Very disorderly corps yours, Major O’Shaughnessy,’ said the general; ‘ more men up for punishment than any regiment in the service.’

“ Shaugh muttered something, but his voice was

lost in a loud ‘Cock-a-doo-do-doo,’ that some bold chanticleer set up at the moment.

“‘ If the officers do their duty, Major O’Shaughnessy, these acts of insubordination do not occur.’

“‘ Cock-a-doo-do-doo,’ was the reply. Some of the staff found it hard not to laugh; but the General went on—

“‘ If, therefore, the practice does not cease, I ’ll draft the men into West India regiments.’

“‘ Cock-a-doo-do-doo ! ’

“‘ And if any articles pillaged from the inhabitants are detected in the quarters, or about the persons, of the troops——’

“‘ Cock-a-doo-do-doo ! ’ screamed louder here than ever.

“‘ Damn that cock!—where is it ? ’

“ There was a general look around on all sides, which seemed in vain; when a tremendous repetition of the cry resounded from O’Shaughnessy’s coat-pocket, thus detecting the valiant Major himself in the very practice of his corps. There was no standing this; every one burst out into a peal of laughter; and Lord Wellington himself could not resist, but turned away muttering to himself as he went, ‘ Damned robbers, every man of them,’ while a final war-note from the Major’s pocket closed the interview.”

Now, this is an anecdote at which every one will

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laugh; but its effect might have been vastly heightened by putting a few words of grave morality and reprobation of the conduct of his troops into the mouth of O'Shaughnessy, upon whose character they would have told well. The cock, in interrupting the thread of his discourse, would thus have afforded an excellent context. We have scarcely a reader, moreover, who will fail to perceive the want of tact shown in dwelling upon the mirth which the anecdote occasioned. The error here is precisely like that of a man's laughing at his own spoken jokes. Our author is uniformly guilty of this mistake. He has an absurd fashion, also, of informing the reader, at the conclusion of each of his anecdotes, that, however good the anecdote might be, he (the reader) cannot enjoy it to the full extent in default of the manner in which it was orally narrated. He has no business to say anything of the kind. It is his duty to convey the manner not less than the matter of his narratives.

But we may say of these latter that, in general, they have the air of being remembered rather than invented. No man who has seen much of the rough life of the camp will fail to recognize among them many very old acquaintances. Some of them are as ancient as the hills, and have been, time out of mind, the common property of the bivouac. They have been narrated orally all the world over. The chief merit of the writer is, that he has been the first to collect and to

print them. It is observable, in fact, that the second volume of the work is very far inferior to the first. The author seems to have exhausted his whole hoarded store in the beginning. His conclusion is barren indeed, and but for the historical details, for which he has no claim to merit, would be especially prosy and dull. Now, the true invention never exhausts itself. It is mere cant and ignorance to talk of the possibility of the really imaginative man's "writing himself out." His soul but derives nourishment from the streams that flow therefrom. As well prate about the aridity of the eternal ocean *ἔξ οὐπερ πάντες ποταμοί.* So long as the universe of thought shall furnish matter for novel combination, so long will the spirit of true genius be original, be exhaustless, be itself.

A few cursory observations. The book is filled to overflowing with songs of very doubtful excellence, the most of which are put into the mouth of Mickey Free, an amusing Irish servant of O'Malley's, and are given as his impromptu effusions. The subject of the improvisos is always the matter in hand at the moment of composition. The author evidently prides himself upon his poetical powers, about which the less we say the better; but if anything were wanting to assure us of his absurd ignorance and inappreciation of art, we should find the fullest assurance in the mode in which these doggerel verses are introduced.

The occasional sentiment with which the volumes

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are interspersed there is an absolute necessity for skipping.

Can anybody tell us what is meant by the affectation of the word *L'envoy*, which is made the heading of two prefaces ?

That portion of the account of the battle of Waterloo which gives O'Malley's experiences while a prisoner, and in close juxtaposition to Napoleon, bears evident traces of having been translated, and very literally too, from a French manuscript.

The English of the work is sometimes even amusing. We have continually, for example, "eat," the present, for "ate," perfect—page 17. At page 16 we have this delightful sentence: "Captain Hammersley, however, never took further notice of me, but continued to recount, for the amusement of those about, several excellent stories of his military career, which I confess were heard with every test of delight by all save me." At page 357 we have some sage talk about "the entire of the army"; and at page 368 the accomplished O'Malley speaks of "drawing a last look upon his sweetheart." These things arrest our attention as we open the book at random. It abounds in them, and in vulgarisms even much worse than they.

But why speak of vulgarisms of language? There is a disgusting vulgarity of thought which pervades and contaminates this whole production, and from which a delicate or lofty mind will shrink as from a

pestilence. Not the least repulsive manifestation of this leprosy is to be found in the author's blind and grovelling worship of mere rank. Of the Prince Regent, that filthy compound of all that is bestial, that lazarus-house of all moral corruption, he scruples not to speak in terms of the grossest adulation, sneering at Edmund Burke in the same villainous breath in which he extols the talents, the graces, and the virtues of George the Fourth! That any man, to-day, can be found so degraded in heart as to style this reprobate "one who, in every feeling of his nature, and in every feature of his deportment, was every inch a prince," is matter for grave reflection and sorrowful debate. The American, at least, who shall peruse the concluding pages of the book now under review and not turn in disgust from the base sycophancy which infects them, is unworthy of his country and his name. But the truth is, that a gross and contracted soul renders itself unquestionably manifest in almost every line of the composition.

And this—this is the work, in respect to which its author, aping the airs of intellect, prates about his "haggard cheek," his "sunken eye," his "aching and tired head," his "nights of toil," and (good heavens!) his "days of thought"! That the thing is popular we grant; while that we cannot deny the fact, we grieve. But the career of true taste is onward, and now moves more vigorously onward than ever, and the

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period, perhaps, is not hopelessly distant, when in decrying the mere balderdash of such matters as *Charles O'Malley*, we shall do less violence to the feelings and judgment even of the populace than, we much fear, has been done in this article.





Longfellow's Ballads¹

“**L**y a parier,” says Chamfort, “que toute idée publique, toute convention reçue, est une sottise, car elle a convenu au plus grand nombre.”—“One would be safe in wagering that any given public idea is erroneous, for it has been yielded to the clamor of the majority;” and this strictly philosophical, although somewhat French, assertion, has especial bearing upon the whole race of what are termed maxims and popular proverbs, nine tenths of which are the quintessence of folly. One of the most deplorably false of them is the antique adage, *De gustibus non est disputandum* (there should be no disputing about taste). Here the idea designed to be conveyed is that any one person has as just right to consider his own taste the true as has any one other; that taste itself, in short, is an arbitrary something, amenable to no law, and measurable by no definite rules. It must be confessed, however, that the ex-

¹ *Ballads and Other Poems*, By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, author of *Voices of the Night*, *Hyperion*, etc. Second edition. John Owen: Cambridge.

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ceedingly vague and impotent treatises which are alone extant have much to answer for as regards confirming the general error. Not the least important service which, hereafter, mankind will owe to phrenology may, perhaps, be recognized in an analysis of the real principles, and a digest of the resulting laws of taste. These principles, in fact, are as clearly traceable, and these laws as readily susceptible of system as are any whatever.

In the meantime, the insane adage above mentioned is in no respect more generally, more stupidly, and more pertinaciously quoted than by the admirers of what is termed the "good old Pope," or the "good old Goldsmith school" of poetry, in reference to the bolder, more natural, and more ideal compositions of such authors as Coëtlogon and Lamartine¹ in France; Herder, Körner, and Uhland in Germany; Brun and Baggesen in Denmark; Bellman, Tegnér, and Nyberg² in Sweden; Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and Tennyson in England; Lowell and Longfellow in America. *De gustibus non*, say these "good-old-school" fellows; and we have no doubt that their mental translation of the phrase is: "We pity your taste—we pity everybody's taste but our own."

It is our purpose to controvert the popular idea that the poets just mentioned owe to novelty, to trickeries

¹ We allude here chiefly to the *David* of Coëtlogon, and only to the *Châte d'un Ange*, of Lamartine.

² Julia C. Nyberg, author of the *Dikter von Euphrosyne*.

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of expression, and to other meretricious effects their appreciation by certain readers; to demonstrate (for the matter is susceptible of demonstration) that such poetry, and such alone, has fulfilled the legitimate office of the Muse, has thoroughly satisfied an earnest and unquenchable desire existing in the heart of man.

This volume of ballads and tales includes, with several brief original pieces, a translation from the Swedish of Tegnér. In attempting (what never should be attempted) a literal version of both the words and the metre of this poem, Professor Longfellow has failed to do justice either to his author or himself. He has striven to do what no man ever did well, and what, from the nature of language itself, never can be done well. Unless, for example, we shall come to have an influx of spondees in our English tongue, it will always be impossible to construct an English hexameter. Our spondees, or, we should say, our spondaic words, are rare. In the Swedish they are nearly as abundant as in the Latin and Greek. We have only "compound," "context," "footfall," and a few other similar ones. This is the difficulty; and that it is so will become evident upon reading *The Children of the Lord's Supper*, where the sole readable verses are those in which we meet with the rare spondiac dissyllables. We mean to say readable as hexameters; for many of them will read very well as mere English dactylics with certain irregularities.

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Much as we admire the genius of Mr. Longfellow, we are fully sensible of his many errors of affectation and imitation. His artistic skill is great and his ideality high. But his conception of the aims of poesy is all wrong; and this we shall prove at some future day, to our own satisfaction, at least. His didactics are all out of place. He has written brilliant poems, by accident; that is to say, when permitting his genius to get the better of his conventional habit of thinking, a habit deduced from German study. We do not mean to say that a didactic moral may not be well made the undercurrent of a poetical thesis, but that it can never be well put so obtrusively forth as in the majority of his compositions. . . .

We have said that Mr. Longfellow's conception of the aims of poesy is erroneous; and that thus, laboring at a disadvantage, he does violent wrong to his own high powers; and now the question is, What are his ideas of the aims of the Muse, as we gather these ideas from the general tendency of his poems? It will be at once evident that, imbued with the peculiar spirit of German song (in pure conventionality) he regards the inculcation of a moral as essential. Here we find it necessary to repeat that we have reference only to the general tendency of his compositions; for there are some magnificent exceptions, where, as if by accident, he has permitted his genius to get the better of his conventional prejudice. But didacticism is the prevalent

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tone of his song. His invention, his imagery, his all, is made subservient to the elucidation of some one or more points (but rarely of more than one) which he looks upon as truth. And that this mode of procedure will find stern defenders should never excite surprise, so long as the world is full to overflowing with cant and conventicles. There are men who will scramble on all fours through the muddiest sloughs of vice to pick up a single apple of virtue. There are things called men who, so long as the sun rolls, will greet with snuffing huzzas every figure that takes upon itself the semblance of truth, even although the figure, in itself only a "stuffed Paddy," be as much out of place as a toga on the statue of Washington, or out of season as rabbits in the days of the dog star. . . .

We say this with little fear of contradiction. Yet the spirit of our assertion must be more heeded than the letter. Mankind have seemed to define poesy in a thousand, and in a thousand conflicting, definitions. But the war is one only of words. Induction is as well applicable to this subject as to the most palpable and utilitarian; and by its sober processes we find that, in respect to compositions which have been really received as poems, the imaginative, or, more popularly, the creative portions alone have insured them to be so received. Yet these works, on account of these portions, having once been so received and so named, it has happened, naturally and inevitably, that other por-

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tions totally unpoetic have not only come to be regarded by the popular voice as poetic, but have been made to serve as false standards of perfection in the adjustment of other poetical claims. Whatever has been found in whatever has been received as a poem has been blindly regarded as *ex statū* poetic. And this is a species of gross error which scarcely could have made its way into any less intangible topic. In fact, that license which appertains to the Muse herself, it has been thought decorous, if not sagacious, to indulge, in all examination of her character. . . .

Poesy is a response—unsatisfactory, it is true—but still in some measure a response, to a natural and irrepressible demand. Man being what he is, the time could never have been in which poesy was not. Its first element is the thirst for supernal beauty, a beauty which is not afforded the soul by any existing collocation of earth's forms, a beauty which, perhaps, no possible combination of these forms would fully produce. Its second element is the attempt to satisfy this thirst by novel combinations among those forms of beauty which already exist, or by novel combinations of those combinations which our predecessors, toiling in chase of the same phantom, have already set in order. We thus clearly deduce the novelty, the originality, the invention, the imagination, or, lastly, the creation of beauty (for the terms as here employed are synonymous), as the essence of all poesy. Nor is this idea so

much at variance with ordinary opinion as, at first sight, it may appear. A multitude of antique dogmas on this topic will be found, when divested of extrinsic speculation, to be easily resolvable into the definition now proposed. We do nothing more than present tangibly the vague clouds of the world's idea. We recognize the idea itself floating, unsettled, indefinite, in every attempt which has yet been made to circumscribe the conception of "poesy" in words. A striking instance of this is observable in the fact that no definition exists in which either "the beautiful," or some one of those qualities which we have above designated synonymously with "creation," has not been pointed out as the chief attribute of the Muse. "Invention," however, or "imagination," is by far more commonly insisted upon. The word *ποίησις* itself (creation) speaks volumes upon this point. Neither will it be amiss here to mention Count Bielfeld's definition of poetry as *L'art d'exprimer les pensées par la fiction*. With this definition, of which the philosophy is profound to a certain extent, the German terms *Dichtkunst*, the art of fiction, and *dichten*, to feign, which are used for "poetry" and "to make verses" are in full and remarkable accordance. It is nevertheless, in the combination of the two omnipresent ideas that the novelty and, we believe, the force of our own proposition are to be found. . . .

The elements of that beauty which is felt in sound

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may be the mutual or common heritage of earth and heaven. Contenting ourselves with the firm conviction that music, in its modifications of rhythm and rhyme, is of so vast a moment to poesy as never to be neglected by him who is truly poetical, is of so mighty a force in furthering the great aim intended, that he is mad who rejects its assistance,—content with this idea we shall not pause to maintain its absolute essentiality for the mere sake of rounding a definition. That our definition of poetry will necessarily exclude much of what, through a supine toleration, has been hitherto ranked as poetical, is a matter which affords us not even momentary concern. We address but the thoughtful, and heed only their approval—with our own. If our suggestions are truthful, then “after many days” shall they be understood as truth, even though found in contradiction of all that has been hitherto so understood. If false, shall we not be the first to bid them die?

We would reject, of course, all such matters as Armstrong on *Health*, a revolting production; Pope’s *Essay on Man*, which may well be content with the title of an *Essay on Rhyme*; *Hudibras*, and other merely humorous pieces. We do not gainsay the peculiar merits of either of these latter compositions, but deny them the position held. In a notice of Brainard’s *Poems*, we took occasion to show that the common use of a certain instrument (rhythm) had tended,

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more than aught else, to confound humorous verse with poetry. The observation is now recalled to corroborate what we have just said in respect to the vast effect or force of melody in itself,—an effect which could elevate into even momentary confusion with the highest efforts of mind compositions such as are the greater number of satires or burlesques. . . .

We have shown our ground of objection to the general themes of Professor Longfellow. In common with all who claim the sacred title of poet, he should limit his endeavors to the creation of novel moods of beauty, in form, in color, in sound, in sentiment; for over all this wide range has the poetry of words dominion. To what the world terms prose may be safely and properly left all else. The artist who doubts of his thesis, may always resolve his doubt by the single question, “Might not this matter be as well or better handled in prose?” If it may, then is it no subject for the Muse. In the general acceptation of the term “beauty” we are content to rest; being careful only to suggest that, in our peculiar views, it must be understood as inclusive of the sublime.

Of the pieces which constitute the present volume, there are not more than one or two thoroughly fulfilling the ideas we have proposed; although the volume, as a whole, is by no means so chargeable with didacticism as Mr. Longfellow's previous book. We would mention as poems nearly true, *The Village Blacksmith*,

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The Wreck of the Hesperus, and especially *The Skeleton in Armor*. In the first-mentioned we have the beauty of simple-mindedness as a genuine thesis; and this thesis is inimitably handled until the concluding stanza, where the spirit of legitimate poesy is aggrieved in the pointed antithetical deduction of a moral from what has gone before. In *The Wreck of the Hesperus* we have the beauty of child-like confidence and innocence, with that of the father's stern courage and affection. But, with slight exception, those particulars of the storm here detailed are not poetic subjects. Their thrilling horror belongs to prose, in which it could be far more effectively discussed, as Professor Longfellow may assure himself at any moment by experiment. There are points of a tempest which afford the loftiest and truest poetical themes,—points in which pure beauty is found, or, better still, beauty heightened into the sublime by terror. But when we read, among other similar things that

The salt sea was frozen on her breast,
The salt tears in her eyes,

we feel, if not positive disgust, at least a chilling sense of the inappropriate. In *The Skeleton in Armor* we find a pure and perfect thesis artistically treated. We find the beauty of bold courage and self-confidence, of love and maiden devotion, of reckless adventure, and

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finally of life-contemning grief. Combined with all this, we have numerous points of beauty apparently insulated, but all aiding the main effect or impression. The heart is stirred, and the mind does not lament its mal-instruction. The metre is simple, sonorous, well-balanced, and fully adapted to the subject. Upon the whole, there are few truer poems than this. It has but one defect—an important one. The prose remarks prefacing the narrative are really necessary. But every work of art should contain within itself all that is requisite for its own comprehension. And this remark is especially true of the ballad. In poems of magnitude the mind of the reader is not, at all times, enabled to include, in one comprehensive survey, the proportions and proper adjustment of the whole. He is pleased, if at all, with particular passages; and the sum of his pleasure is compounded of the sums of the pleasurable sentiments inspired by these individual passages in the progress of perusal. But, in pieces of less extent, the pleasure is unique, in the proper acceptation of this term,—the understanding is employed, without difficulty, in the contemplation of the picture as a whole; and thus its effect will depend, in great measure, upon the perfection of its finish, upon the nice adaptation of its constituent parts, and, especially, upon what is rightly termed by Schlegel the unity or totality of interest. But the practice of prefixing explanatory passages is utterly at variance

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with such unity. By the prefix, we are either put in possession of the subject of the poem, or some hint, historic fact, or suggestion is thereby afforded, not included in the body of the piece, which, without the hint, is incomprehensible. In the latter case, while perusing the poem, the reader must revert, in mind at least, to the prefix, for the necessary explanation. In the former, the poem being a mere paraphrase of the prefix, the interest is divided between the prefix and the paraphrase. In either instance the totality of effect is destroyed.

Of the other original poems in the volume before us, there is none in which the aim of instruction, or truth, has not been too obviously substituted for the legitimate aim, beauty. We have heretofore taken occasion to say that a didactic moral might be happily made the under-current of a poetical theme, and we have treated this point at length, in a review of Moore's *Alciphron*; but the moral thus conveyed is invariably an ill effect when obtruding beyond the upper-current of the thesis itself. Perhaps the worst specimen of this obtrusion is given us by our poet in *Blind Bartimeus* and *The Goblet of Life*, where it will be observed that the sole interest of the upper-current of meaning depends upon its relation or reference to the under. What we read upon the surface would be *vox et præterea nihil* in default of the moral beneath. The Greek finales of *Blind Bartimeus* are an affectation altogether

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inexcusable. What the small, second-hand, Gibbonish pedantry of Byron introduced is unworthy the imitation of Longfellow.

Of the translations we scarcely think it necessary to speak at all. We regret that our poet will persist in busying himself about such matters. His time might be better employed in original conception. Most of these versions are marked with the error upon which we have commented. This error is, in fact, essentially Germanic. *The Luck of Edenhall*, however, is a truly beautiful poem; and we say this with all that deference which the opinion of the *Democratic Review* demands. This composition appears to us one of the very finest. It has all the free, hearty, obvious movement of the true ballad-legend. The greatest force of language is combined in it with the richest imagination, acting in its most legitimate province. Upon the whole, we prefer it even to the *Sword-Song* of Körner. The pointed moral with which it terminates is so exceedingly natural, so perfectly fluent from the incidents, that we have hardly heart to pronounce it in ill taste. We may observe of this ballad, in conclusion, that its subject is more physical than is usual in Germany. Its images are rich rather in physical than in moral beauty. And this tendency in song is the true one. It is chiefly, if we are not mistaken,—it is chiefly amid forms of physical loveliness (we use the word “forms” in its widest sense as embracing modifi-

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cations of sound and color) that the soul seeks the realization of its dreams of beauty. It is to her demand in this sense especially, that the poet who is wise will most frequently and most earnestly respond.

The Children of the Lord's Supper is, beyond doubt, a true and most beautiful poem in great part, while, in some particulars, it is too metaphysical to have any pretension to the name. We have already objected, briefly, to its metre,—the ordinary Latin or Greek hexameter,—dactyls and spondees at random, with a spondee in conclusion. We maintain that the hexameter can never be introduced into our language, from the nature of that language itself. This rhythm demands, for English ears, a preponderance of natural spondees. Our tongue has few. Not only does the Latin and Greek, with the Swedish and some others, abound in them, but the Greek and Roman ear had become reconciled (why or how is unknown) to the reception of artificial spondees; that is to say, spondaic words formed partly of one word and partly of another, or from an excised part of one word. In short, the ancients were content to read as they scanned, or nearly so. It may be safely prophesied that we shall never do this; and thus we shall never admit English hexameters. The attempt to introduce them, after the repeated failures of Sir Philip Sidney and others, is, perhaps, somewhat discreditable to the scholarship of Professor Longfellow. The *Democratic*

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Review, in saying that he has triumphed over difficulties in this rhythm, has been deceived, it is evident, by the facility with which some of these verses may be read. In glancing over the poem, we do not observe a single verse which can be read, to English ears, as a Greek hexameter. There are many, however, which can be well read as mere English dactylic verses; such, for example, as the well-known lines of Byron, commencing

Know ye the | land where the | cypress and | myrtle.

These lines, although full of irregularities, are, in their perfection, formed of three dactyls and a cæsura, just as if we should cut short the initial verse of the Bucolics thus:

Tityre | tu patu | læ recu | bans—

The “myrtle,” at the close of Byron’s line, is a double rhyme, and must be understood as one syllable.

Now, a great number of Professor Longfellow’s hexameters are merely these dactylic lines continued for two feet. For example:

Whispered the | race of the | flowers and | merry on | balan-
cing | branches.

In this example, also, “branches,” which is a double ending, must be regarded as the cæsura, or one syllable, of which alone it has the force.

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As we have already alluded, in one or two regards, to a notice of these poems which appeared in the *Democratic Review*, we may as well here proceed with some few further comments upon the article in question, with whose general tenor we are happy to agree.

The *Review* speaks of *Maidenhood* as a poem, "not to be understood but at the expense of more time and trouble than a song can justly claim." We are scarcely less surprised at this opinion from Mr. Langtree than we were at the condemnation of *The Luck of Edenhall*.

Maidenhood is faulty, it appears to us, only on the score of its theme, which is somewhat didactic. Its meaning seems simplicity itself. A maiden on the verge of womanhood, hesitating to enjoy life (for which she has a strong appetite) through a false idea of duty, is bidden to fear nothing, having purity of heart as her lion of Una.

What Mr. Langtree styles "an unfortunate peculiarity" in Mr. Longfellow, resulting from "adherence to a false system," has really been always regarded by us as one of his idiosyncratic merits. "In each poem," says the critic, "he has but one idea, which, in the progress of his song, is gradually unfolded, and at last reaches its full development in the concluding lines; this singleness of thought might lead a harsh critic to suspect intellectual barrenness." It leads us, individually, only to a full sense of the artistical power

and knowledge of the poet. We confess that now, for the first time, we hear unity of conception objected to as a defect. But Mr. Langtree seems to have fallen into the singular error of supposing the poet to have absolutely but one idea in each of his ballads. Yet how "one idea" can be "gradually unfolded" without other ideas, is, to us, a mystery of mysteries. Mr. Longfellow, very properly, has but one leading idea which forms the basis of his poem; but to the aid and development of this one there are innumerable others, of which the rare excellence is, that all are in keeping, that none could be well omitted, that each tends to the one general effect. It is unnecessary to say another word upon this topic.

In speaking of *Excelsior*, Mr. Langtree (are we wrong in attributing the notice to his very forcible pen?) seems to labor under some similar misconception. "It carries along with it," says he, "a false moral which greatly diminishes its merit in our eyes. The great merit of a picture, whether made with the pencil or pen, is its truth; and this merit does not belong to Mr. Longfellow's sketch. Men of genius may, and probably do, meet with greater difficulties in their struggles with the world than their fellow-men who are less highly gifted; but their power of overcoming obstacles is proportionably greater, and the result of their laborious suffering is not death but immortality."

That the chief merit of a picture is its truth is an

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assertion deplorably erroneous. Even in painting, which is, more essentially than poesy, a mimetic art, the proposition cannot be sustained. Truth is not even the aim. Indeed, it is curious to observe how very slight a degree of truth is sufficient to satisfy the mind, which acquiesces in the absence of numerous essentials in the thing depicted. An outline frequently stirs the spirit more pleasantly than the most elaborate picture. We need only refer to the compositions of Flaxman and of Retzch. Here all details are omitted, nothing can be further from truth. Without even color the most thrilling effects are produced. In statues we are rather pleased than disgusted with the want of the eyeball. The hair of the Venus de Medici was gilded. Truth indeed! The grapes of Zeuxis as well as the curtain of Parrhasius were received as indisputable evidence of the truthful ability of these artists, but they were not even classed among their pictures. If truth is the highest aim of either painting or poesy, then Jan Steen was a greater artist than Angelo, and Crabbe is a more noble poet than Milton.

But we have not quoted the observation of Mr. Langtree to deny its philosophy; our design was simply to show that he has misunderstood the poet. *Excelsior* has not even a remote tendency to the interpretation assigned it by the critic. It depicts the earnest upward impulse of the soul, an impulse not to be subdued even in death. Despising danger, resisting

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pleasure, the youth, bearing the banner inscribed "Excelsior!" (higher still!) struggles through all difficulties to an Alpine summit. Warned to be content with the elevation attained, his cry is still "Excelsior!" and even in falling dead on the highest pinnacle his cry is still "Excelsior!" There is yet an immortal height to be surmounted, an ascent in eternity. The poet holds in view the idea of never-ending progress. That he is misunderstood is rather the misfortune of Mr. Langtree than the fault of Mr. Longfellow. There is an old adage about the difficulty of one's furnishing an auditor with matter to be comprehended and brains for its comprehension.





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 "A poet," says Mr. Griswold, in his *Poets and Poetry of America*, "the standing of Mr. Dawes is as yet unsettled, there being a wide difference of opinion respecting his writings." The width of this difference is apparent; and, while to many it is matter for wonder, to those who have the interest of our literature at heart, it is, more properly, a source of mortification and regret. That the author in question has long enjoyed what we term "a high poetical reputation" cannot be denied; and in no manner is this point more strikingly evinced than in the choice of his works, some two years since, by one of our most enterprising publishers, as the initial volume of a series, the avowed object of which was the setting forth, in the best array of paper, type, and pictorial embellishment, the élite of the American poets. As a writer of occasional stanzas he has been long before the public; always eliciting, from a great variety of sources, unqualified commendation. With

the exception of a solitary remark, adventured by ourselves in *A Chapter on Autography* there has been no written dissent from the universal opinion in his favor, the universal apparent opinion. Mr. Griswold's observation must be understood, we presume, as referring to the conversational opinion upon this topic; or it is not impossible that he holds in view the difference between the criticism of the newspaper paragraphs and the private comment of the educated and intelligent. Be this as it may, the rapidly growing "reputation" of our poet was much enhanced by the publication of his first compositions "of length," and attained its climax, we believe, upon the public recitation, by himself, of a tragic drama, in five acts, entitled *Athenia of Damascus*, to a large assembly of admiring and applauding friends, gathered together for the occasion in one of the halls of the University of New York.

This popular decision, so frequent and so public, in regard to the poetical ability of Mr. Dawes, might be received as evidence of his actual merit (and by thousands it is so received) were it not too scandalously at variance with a species of criticism which will not be resisted,—with the perfectly simple precepts of the very commonest common sense. The peculiarity of Mr. Griswold's observation has induced us to make inquiry into the true character of the volume to which we have before alluded, and which embraces, we be-

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lieve, the chief portion of the published verse-compositions of its author.¹ This inquiry has but resulted in the confirmation of our previous opinion; and we now hesitate not to say, that no man in America has been more shamefully overestimated than the one who forms the subject of this article. We say "shamefully"; for, although a better day is now dawning upon our literary interests, and a laudation so indiscriminate will never be sanctioned again, the laudation in this instance, as it stands upon record, must be regarded as a laughable although bitter satire upon the general zeal, accuracy, and independence of that critical spirit which, but a few years ago, pervaded and degraded the land.

In what we shall say we have no intention of being profound. Here is a case in which anything like analysis would be utterly thrown away. Our purpose (which is truth) will be more fully answered by an unvarnished exposition of fact. It appears to us, indeed, that in excessive generalization lies one of the leading errors of a criticism employed upon a poetical literature so immature as our own. We rhapsodize rather than discriminate, delighting more in the dictation or discussion of a principle than in its particular and methodical application. The wildest and most erratic effusion of the Muse, not utterly worthless, will be

¹ *Geraldine, Athenia of Damascus, and Miscellaneous Poems.* By Rufus Dawes
Published by Samuel Colman: New York.

found more or less indebted to method for whatever of value it embodies; and we shall discover, conversely, that in any analysis of even the wildest effusion, we labor without method only to labor without end. There is little reason for that vagueness of comment which, of late, we so pertinaciously affect, and which has been brought into fashion, no doubt, through the proverbial facility and security of merely general remark. In regard to the leading principles of true poesy, these, we think, stand not at all in need of the elucidation hourly wasted upon them. Founded in the unerring instincts of our nature, they are enduring and immutable. In a rigid scrutiny of any number of directly conflicting opinions upon a poetical topic, we will not fail to perceive that principles identical in every important point have been, in each opinion, either asserted, or intimated, or unwittingly allowed an influence. The differences of decision arose simply from those of application; and from such variety in the applied rather than in the conceived idea, sprang, undoubtedly, the absurd distinctions of the "schools."

Geraldine is the title of the first and longest poem in the volume before us. It embraces some three hundred and fifty stanzas, the whole being a most servile imitation of the *Don Juan* of Lord Byron. The outrageous absurdity of the systematic digression in the British original was so managed as to form not a little portion of its infinite interest and humor; and

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the fine discrimination of the writer pointed out to him a limit beyond which he never ventured with this tantalizing species of drollery. *Geraldine* may be regarded, however, as a simple embodiment of the whole soul of digression. It is a mere mass of irrelevancy, amid the mad farrago of which we detect with difficulty even the faintest vestige of a narrative, and where the continuous lapse from impertinence to impertinence is seldom justified by any shadow of appositeness or even of the commonest relation.

To afford the reader any proper conception of the story is, of course, a matter of difficulty; we must content ourselves with a mere outline of the general conduct. This we shall endeavor to give without indulgence in those feelings of risibility stirred up in us by the primitive perusal. We shall rigorously avoid every species of exaggeration, and confine ourselves, with perfect honesty, to the conveyance of a distinct image.

Geraldine, then, opens with some four or five stanzas descriptive of a sylvan scene in America. We could, perhaps, render Mr. Dawes's poetical reputation no greater service than by the quotation of these simple verses in full:

I know a spot where poets fain would dwell
To gather flowers and food for afterthought,
As bees draw honey from the rose's cell,
To hive among the treasures they have wrought;

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And there a cottage from a sylvan screen
Sent up a curling smoke amidst the green.

Around that hermit home of quietude
The elm trees whispered with the summer air,
And nothing ever ventured to intrude
But happy birds that caroled wildly there,
Or honey-laden harvesters that flew
Humming away to drink the morning dew.

Around the door the honeysuckle climbed
And Multa-flora spread her countless roses,
And never poet sang nor minstrel rhymed
Romantic scene where happiness reposes,
Sweeter to sense than that enchanting dell
Where homesick memory fondly loves to dwell.

Beneath the mountain's brow the cottage stood,
Hard by a shelving lake whose pebbled bed
Was skirted by the drapery of a wood
That hung its festoon foliage overhead,
Where wild deer came at eve unharmed, to drink,
While moonlight threw their shadows from the brink.

The green earth heaved her giant waves around,
Where, through the mountain vista, one vast height
Towered heavenward without peer, his forehead bound
With gorgeous clouds, at times of changeful light,
While, far below, the lake in bridal rest
Slept with his glorious picture on her breast.

Here is an air of quietude in good keeping with the theme; the "giant waves" in the last stanza redeem it from much exception otherwise; and perhaps we

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need say nothing at all of the suspicious-looking compound "Multa-flora." Had Mr. Dawes always written even nearly so well, we should have been spared today the painful task imposed upon us by a stern sense of our critical duty. These passages are followed immediately by an address or invocation to "Peerless America," including apostrophes to Allston and Claude Lorraine.

We now learn the name of the tenant of the cottage, which is Wilton, and ascertain that he has an only daughter. A single stanza quoted at this juncture will aid the reader's conception of the queer tone of philosophical rhapsody with which the poem teems, and some specimen of which is invariably made to follow each little modicum of incident:

How like the heart is to an instrument
A touch can wake to gladness or to woe!
How like the circumambient element
The spirit with its undulating flow!
The heart—the soul—O Mother Nature, why
This universal bond of sympathy?

After two pages much in this manner, we are told that Geraldine is the name of the maiden, and are informed, with comparatively little circumlocution, of her character. She is beautiful and kind-hearted, and somewhat romantic, and "some thought her reason touched," for which we have little disposition to blame them. There is now much about Kant and Fichte;

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about Schelling, Hegel, and Cousin (which last is made to rhyme with "gang"); about Milton, Byron, Homer, Spinoza, David Hume, and Mirabeau; and a good deal, too, about the *scribendi cacoëthes*, in which an evident misunderstanding of the quantity of *cacoëthes* brings, again, into very disagreeable suspicion the writer's cognizance of the Latin tongue. At this point we may refer, also, to such absurdities as

Truth with her thousand-folded robe of error
Close shut in her *sarcophagi* of terror,

and

Where *candelabri* silver the white walls.

Now, no one is presupposed to be cognizant of any language beyond his own; to be ignorant of Latin is no crime; to pretend a knowledge is beneath contempt; and the pretender will attempt in vain to utter or to write two consecutive phrases of a foreign idiom without betraying his deficiency to those who are conversant.

At page 39, there is some prospect of a progress in the story. Here we are introduced to a Mr. Acus and his fair daughter, Miss Alice:

Acus had been a dashing Bond Street tailor
Some few short years before, who took his measures
So carefully he always cut the jailor
And filled his coffers with exhaustless treasures;
Then with his wife, a son, and three fair daughters,
He sunk the goose and straightway crossed the waters.

Rufus Dawes

His residence is in the immediate vicinity of Wilton. The daughter, Miss Alice, who is said to be quite a belle, is enamored of one Waldron, a foreigner, a lion, and a gentleman of questionable reputation. His character (which for our life and soul we cannot comprehend) is given within the space of some forty or fifty stanzas, made to include, at the same time, an essay on motives, deduced from the text, "Whatever is, must be," and illuminated by a long note at the end of the poem, wherein the *systime* (quere *système*?) *de la nature* is sturdily attacked. Let us speak the truth: this note (and the whole of them, for there are many) may be regarded as a glorious specimen of the concentrated essence of rigmarole, and, to say nothing of their utter absurdity *per se*, are so ludicrously uncalled for, and grotesquely out of place, that we found it impossible to refrain, during their perusal, from a most unbecoming and uproarious guffaw. We will be pardoned for giving a specimen, selecting it for its brevity:

Reason, he deemed, could measure everything,
And reason told him that there was a law
Of mental action which must ever fling
A death-bolt at all faith, and this he saw
Was Transference.¹⁴

Turning to Note 14, we read thus:

"If any one has a curiosity to look into this subject [does Mr. Dawes really think any one so great a

Rufus Dawes

fool ?], and wishes to see how far the force of reasoning and analysis may carry him, independently of revelation, I would suggest [thank you, sir] such inquiries as the following:

“ Whether the first philosophy, considered in relation to physics, was first in time ?

“ How far our moral perceptions have been influenced by natural phenomena ?

“ How far our metaphysical notions of cause and effect are attributable to the transference of notions connected with logical language ? ”

And all this in a poem about Acus, a tailor!

Waldron prefers, unhappily, Geraldine to Alice, and Geraldine returns his love, exciting thus the deep indignation of the neglected fair one,

whom love and jealousy bear up
To mingle poison in her rival's cup.

Miss A. has among her adorers one of the genus loafer, whose appellation, not improperly, is Bore. B. is acquainted with a milliner—the milliner of the disconsolate lady:

She made this milliner her friend, who swore,
To work her full revenge through Mr. Bore.

And now says the poet:

I leave your sympathetic fancies,
To fill the outline of this pencil sketch.

Rufus Dawes

This filling has been, with us at least, a matter of no little difficulty. We believe, however, that the affair is intended to run thus:—Waldron is enticed to some vile sins by Bore, and the knowledge of these, on the part of Alice, places the former gentleman in her power.

We are now introduced to a *fête champêtre* at the residence of Acus, who, by the way, has a son, Clifford, a suitor to Geraldine with the approbation of her father,—that good old gentleman, for whom our sympathies were excited in the beginning of things, being influenced by the consideration that this scion of the house of the tailor will inherit a plum. The worst of the whole is, however, that the romantic Geraldine, who should have known better, and who loves Waldron, loves also the young knight of the shears. The consequence is a *rencontre* of the rival suitors at the *fête champêtre*, Waldron knocking his antagonist on the head and throwing him into the lake. The murderer, as well as we can make out the narrative, now joins a piratical band, among whom he alternately cuts throats and sings songs of his own composition. In the meantime the deserted Geraldine mourns alone, till, upon a certain day,

A shape stood by her like a thing of air—
She started—Waldron's haggard face was there.

He laid her gently down, of sense bereft,
And sunk his picture on her bosom's snow.

Rufus Dawes

And close beside, these lines in blood he left:

“ Farewell forever, Geraldine, I go.

Another woman’s victim—dare I tell ?

’T is Alice !—curse us, Geraldine !—farewell !”

There is no possibility of denying the fact: this is a droll piece of business. The lover brings forth a miniature (Mr. Dawes has a passion for miniatures), sinks it in the bosom of the lady, cuts his finger, and writes with the blood an epistle (where is not specified, but we presume he indites it upon the bosom, as it is “ close beside ” the picture), in which epistle he announces that he is “ another woman’s victim,” giving us to understand that he himself is a woman after all, and concluding with the delicious bit of Billingsgate,

dare I tell ?

’T is Alice !—curse us, Geraldine !—farewell !

We suppose, however, that “ curse us ” is a misprint; for why should Geraldine curse both herself and her lover ?—it should have been “ curse it ! ” no doubt. The whole passage, perhaps, would have read better thus:

oh, my eye !

’T is Alice !—d——n it, Geraldine !—good-bye !

The remainder of the narrative may be briefly summed up. Waldron returns to his professional engagements with the pirates, while Geraldine, attended

Rufus Dawes

by her father, goes to sea for the benefit of her health. The consequence is inevitable. The vessels of the separated lovers meet and engage in the most diabolical of conflicts. Both are blown all to pieces. In a boat from one vessel Waldron escapes; in a boat from the other, the lady Geraldine. Now, as a second natural consequence, the parties meet again—destiny is everything in such cases. Well, the parties meet again. The lady Geraldine has “that miniature” about her neck, and the circumstance proves too much for the excited state of mind of Mr. Waldron. He just seizes her ladyship, therefore, by the small of the waist, and incontinently leaps with her into the sea.

However intolerably absurd this skeleton of the story may appear, a thorough perusal will convince the reader that the entire fabric is even more so. It is impossible to convey, in any such digest as we have given, a full idea of the *nâïaseries* with which the narrative abounds. An utter want of keeping is especially manifest throughout. In the most solemnly serious passages we have, for example, incidents of the world of 1839 jumbled up with the distorted mythology of the Greeks. Our conclusion of the drama, as we just gave it, was perhaps ludicrous enough; but how much more preposterous does it appear in the grave language of the poet himself!

And round her neck the miniature was hung

Of him who gazed with hell's unmingle woe;

Rufus Dawes

He saw her, kissed her cheek, and wildly flung
His arms around her with a madd'ning throw;
Then plunged within the cold unfathomed deep
While sirens sang their victim to his sleep!

Only think of a group of sirens singing to sleep a modern "miniatured" flirt, kicking about in the water with a New York dandy in tight pantaloons!

But not even these stupidities would suffice to justify a total condemnation of the poetry of Mr. Dawes. We have known follies very similar committed by men of real ability, and have been induced to disregard them in earnest admiration of the brilliancy of the minor beauty of style. Simplicity, perspicuity, and vigor, or a well-disciplined ornateness of language, have done wonders for the reputation of many a writer really deficient in the higher and more essential qualities of the Muse. But upon these minor points of manner our poet has not even the shadow of a shadow to sustain him. His works, in this respect, may be regarded as a theatrical world of mere verbiage, somewhat speciously bedizened with a tinselly meaning well adapted to the eyes of the rabble. There is not a page of anything that he has written which will bear, for an instant, the scrutiny of a critical eye. Exceedingly fond of the glitter of metaphor, he has not the capacity to manage it, and, in the awkward attemp^t, jumbles together the most incongruous of ornament. Let us take any passage of *Geraldine* by way of exemplification:

Rufus Dawes

Thy rivers swell the sea—
In one eternal diapason pour
Thy cataracts the hymn of liberty,
Teaching the clouds to thunder.

Here we have cataracts teaching clouds to thunder—
and how? By means of a hymn.

Why should chromatic discord charm the ear
And smiles and tears stream o'er with troubled joy ?

Tears may stream over, but not smiles.

Then comes the breathing time of young Romance,
The June of life, when summer's earliest ray
Warms the red arteries, that bound and dance
With soft voluptuous impulses at play,
While the full heart sends forth as from a hive
A thousand wingèd messengers alive.

Let us reduce this to a simple statement, and we have—what? The earliest ray of summer warming red arteries, which are bounding and dancing, and playing with a parcel of urchins, called voluptuous impulses, while the beehive of a heart attached to these dancing arteries is at the same time sending forth a swarm of its innocent little inhabitants.

The eyes were like the sapphire of deep air,
The garb that distance robes Elysium in;
But oh, so much of heaven lingered there
The wayward heart forgot its blissful sin,
And worshipped all Religion well forbids
Beneath the silken fringes of their lids.

Rufus Dawes

That distance is not the cause of the sapphire of the sky, is not to our present purpose. We wish merely to call attention to the verbiage of the stanza. It is impossible to put the latter portion of it into anything like intelligible prose. So much of heaven lingered in the lady's eyes that the wayward heart forgot its blissful sin, and worshipped everything which religion forbids beneath the silken fringes of the lady's eyelids. This we cannot be compelled to understand, and shall therefore say nothing further about it.

She loved to lend Imagination wing
And link her heart's with Juliet's in a dream,
And feel the music of a sister string
That thrilled the current of her vital stream.

How delightful a picture we have here! A lady is lending one of her wings to the spirit, or genius, called Imagination, who, of course, has lost one of his own. While thus employed with one hand, with the other she is chaining her heart to the heart of the fair Juliet. At the same time she is feeling the music of a sister string, and this string is thrilling the current of the lady's vital stream. If this is downright nonsense we cannot be held responsible for its perpetration; it is but the downright nonsense of Mr. Dawes.

Again:

Without the Palinurus of self-science
Byron embarked upon the stormy sea,

Rufus Dawes

To adverse breezes hurling his defiance
And dashing up the rainbows on his lee,
And chasing those he made in wildest mirth,
Or sending back their images to earth.

This stanza we have more than once seen quoted as a fine specimen of the poetical powers of our author. His lordship, no doubt, is herein made to cut a very remarkable figure. Let us imagine him, for one moment, embarked upon a stormy sea, hurling his defiance (literally throwing his gauntlet or glove) to the adverse breezes, dashing up rainbows on his lee, laughing at them and chasing them at the same time, and, in conclusion, "sending back their images to earth." But we have already wearied the reader with this abominable rigamrole. We shall be pardoned, after the many specimens thus given at random, for not carrying out the design we originally intended, that of commenting upon two or three successive pages of *Geraldine* with a view of showing, in a spirit apparently more fair than that of particular selection, the entireness with which the whole poem is pervaded by unintelligibility. To every thinking mind, however, this would seem a work of supererogation. In such matters, by such understandings, the brick of the *skolastikos* will be received implicitly as a sample of the house. The writer capable, to any extent, of such absurdity as we have pointed out, cannot, by any possibility, produce a long article worth reading. We say

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this in the very teeth of the magnificent assembly which listened to the recital of Mr. Dawes, in the great hall of the University of New York. We shall leave *Athenia of Damascus*, without comment, to the decision of those who may find time and temper for its perusal, and conclude our extracts by a quotation, from among the minor poems, of the following very respectable

ANACREONTIC

Fill again the mantling bowl,
Nor fear to meet the morning breaking!
None but slaves should bend the soul
Beneath the chains of mortal making!
Fill your beakers to the brim,
Bacchus soon shall lull your sorrow;
Let delight
But crown the night,
And Care may bring her clouds to-morrow.

Mark this cup of rosy wine
With virgin pureness deeply blushing;
Beauty pressed it from the vine
While Love stood by to charm its gushing;
He who dares to drain it now
Shall drink such bliss as seldom gladdens;
The Moslem's dream
Would joyless seem
To him whose brain its rapture maddens.

Pleasure sparkles on the brim,
Lethe lies far deeper in it;
Both, enticing, wait for him
Whose heart is warm enough to win it;

Rufus Dawes

Hearts like ours, if e'er they chill,
Soon with love again must lighten.
Skies may wear
A darksome air
Where sunshine most is known to brighten.

Then fill, fill high the mantling bowl !
Nor fear to meet the morning breaking !
Care shall never cloud the soul
While Beauty's beaming eyes are waking.
Fill your beakers to the brim,
Bacchus soon shall lull your sorrow ;
Let delight
But crown the night,
And Care may bring her clouds to-morrow.

Whatever shall be, hereafter, the position of Mr. Dawes in the poetical world, he will be indebted for it altogether to his shorter compositions, some of which have the merit of tenderness; others, of melody and force. What seems to be the popular opinion in respect to his more voluminous effusions has been brought about, in some measure, by a certain general tact, nearly amounting to taste, and more nearly the converse of talent. This tact has been especially displayed in the choice of not inelegant titles and other externals; in a peculiar imitative speciousness of manner pervading the surface of his writings; and (here we have the anomaly of a positive benefit deduced from a radical defect) in an absolute deficiency in basis, in stamen, in matter, or pungency, which, if

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even slightly evinced, might have invited the reader to an intimate and understanding perusal, whose result would have been disgust. His poems have not been condemned, only because they have never been read. The glitter upon the surface has sufficed, with the newspaper critic, to justify his hyperboles of praise. Very few persons, we feel assured, have had sufficient nerve to wade through the entire volume now in question, except, as in our own case, with the single object of criticism in view. Mr. Dawes has, also, been aided to a poetical reputation by the amiability of his character as a man. How efficient such causes have before been in producing such effects is a point but too thoroughly understood.

We have already spoken of the numerous friends of the poet; and we shall not here insist upon the fact that we bear him no personal ill-will. With those who know us, such a declaration would appear supererogatory; and by those who know us not, it would doubtless be received with incredulity. What we have said, however, is not in opposition to Mr. Dawes, nor even so much in opposition to the poems of Mr. Dawes, as in defence of the many true souls which, in Mr. Dawes's apotheosis, are aggrieved. The laudation of the unworthy is to the worthy the most bitter of all wrong. But it is unbecoming in him who merely demonstrates a truth, to offer reason or apology for the demonstration.



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THAT we are not a poetical people has been asserted so often and so roundly, both at home and abroad, that the slander, through mere dint of repetition, has come to be received as truth. Yet nothing can be farther removed from it. The mistake is but a portion, or corollary, of the old dogma, that the calculating faculties are at war with the ideal; while, in fact, it may be demonstrated that the two divisions of mental power are never to be found in perfection apart. The highest order of the imaginative intellect is always pre-eminently mathematical; and the converse.

The idiosyncrasy of our political position has stimulated into early action whatever practical talent we possessed. Even in our national infancy we evinced a degree of utilitarian ability which put to shame the mature skill of our forefathers. While yet in leading-strings we proved ourselves adepts in all the arts and sciences which promote the comfort of the animal

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man. But the arena of exertion, and of consequent distinction, into which our first and most obvious wants impelled us, has been regarded as the field of our deliberate choice. Our necessities have been mistaken for our propensities. Having been forced to make railroads, it has been deemed impossible that we should make verse. Because it suited us to construct an engine in the first instance, it has been denied that we could compose an epic in the second. Because we were not all Homers in the beginning, it has been somewhat too rashly taken for granted that we shall be all Jeremy Bentham's to the end.

But this is the purest insanity. The principles of the poetic sentiment lie deep within the immortal nature of man, and have little necessary reference to the worldly circumstances which surround him. The poet in Arcady is, in Kamschatka, the poet still. The self-same Saxon current animates the British and the American heart; nor can any social, or political, or moral, or physical conditions do more than momentarily repress the impulses which glow in our own bosoms as fervently as in those of our progenitors.

Those who have taken most careful note of our literature for the last ten or twelve years will be most willing to admit that we are a poetical people; and in no respect is the fact more plainly evinced than in the eagerness with which books professing to compile or select from the productions of our native bards are

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received and appreciated by the public. Such books meet with success, at least with sale, at periods when the general market for literary wares is in a state of stagnation; and even the ill taste displayed in some of them has not sufficed to condemn.

The Specimens of American Poetry, by Kettell; the *Common-place Book of American Poetry*, by Cheever; a Selection by General Morris; another by Mr. Bryant; the *Poets of America*, by Mr. Keese,—all these have been widely disseminated and well received. In some measure, to be sure, we must regard their success as an affair of personalities. Each individual honored with a niche in the compiler's memory is naturally anxious to possess a copy of the book so honoring him; and this anxiety will extend, in some cases, to ten or twenty of the immediate friends of the complimented; while, on the other hand, purchasers will arise, in no small number, from among a very different class, a class animated by very different feelings. I mean the omitted, the large body of those who, supposing themselves entitled to mention, have yet been unmentioned. These buy the unfortunate book as a matter of course, for the purpose of abusing it with a clear conscience and at leisure. But, holding these deductions in view, we are still warranted in believing that the demand for works of the kind in question is to be attributed, mainly, to the general interest of the subject discussed. The public have been desirous of obtaining

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a more distinct view of our poetical literature than the scattered effusions of our bards and the random criticisms of our periodicals could afford. But, hitherto, nothing has been accomplished in the way of supplying the desideratum. The *Specimens* of Kettell were specimens of nothing but the ignorance and ill taste of the compiler. A large proportion of what he gave to the world as American poetry, to the exclusion of much that was really so, was the doggerel composition of individuals unheard of and undreamed of, except by Mr. Kettell himself. Mr. Cheever's book did not belie its title, and was excessively "common-place." The selection by General Morris was in so far good that it accomplished its object to the full extent. This object looked to nothing more than single, brief extracts from the writings of every one in the country who had established even the slightest reputation as a poet. The extracts, so far as our truer poets were concerned, were tastefully made; but the proverbial kind feeling of the General seduced him into the admission of an inordinate quantity of the purest twattle. It was gravely declared that we had more than two hundred poets in the land. The compilation of Mr. Bryant, from whom much was expected, proved a source of mortification to his friends, and of astonishment and disappointment to all, merely showing that a poet is, necessarily, neither a critical nor an impartial judge of poetry. Mr. Keese succeeded much better.

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He brought to his task, if not the most rigorous impartiality, at least a fine taste, a sound judgment, and a more thorough acquaintance with our poetical literature than had distinguished either of his predecessors.

Much, however, remained to be done; and here it may be right to inquire, "What should be the aim of every compilation of the character now discussed?" The object, in general terms, may be stated, as the conveying, within moderate compass, a distinct view of our poetry and of our poets. This, in fact, is the demand of the public. A book is required, which shall not so much be the reflection of the compiler's peculiar views and opinions upon poetry in the abstract as of the popular judgment upon such poetical works as have come immediately within its observation. It is not the author's business to insist upon his own theory, and, in its support, to rake up from the byways of the country the "inglorious Miltons" who may, possibly, there abound; neither, because ill according with this theory, is it his duty to dethrone and reject those who have long maintained supremacy in the estimation of the people. In this view, it will be seen that regard must be paid to the mere quantity of a writer's effusions. He who has published much is not to be omitted because, in the opinion of the compiler, he has written nothing fit for publication. On the other hand, he who has extemporized a single song, which has met the eye of no one but our bibliographer,

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is not to be set forth among the poetical magnates, even although the one song itself be esteemed equal to the very best of Béranger.

Of the two classes of sins, the negative and the positive, those of omission and those of commission, obvious ones of the former class are, beyond doubt, the more unpardonable. It is better to introduce half a dozen "great unknowns," than to give the "cut direct" to a single individual who has been fairly acknowledged as known. The public, in short, seem to demand such a compendium of our poetical literature as shall embrace specimens from those works alone, of our recognized poets, which either through accident, or by dint of merit, have been most particularly the subjects of public discussion. We wish this, that we may be put in condition to decide for ourselves upon the justice or injustice of the reputation attained. In critical opinion much diversity exists; and, although there is one true and tenable critical opinion, there are still a thousand, upon all topics, which, being only the shadows, have all the outlines, and assume all the movements, of the substance of truth. Thus any critic who should exclude from the compendium all which tallied not with his individual ideas of the Muse would be found to exclude nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of that which the public at large, embracing all varieties of opinion, has been accustomed to acknowledge as poesy.

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These remarks apply only to the admission or rejection of poetical specimens. The public being put fairly in possession of the matter debated, with the provisions above mentioned, the analysis of individual claims, so far as the specimens extend, is not only not unbecoming in the compiler, but a thing to be expected and desired. To this department of his work he should bring analytical ability; a distinct impression of the nature, the principles, and the aims of poetry; a thorough contempt for all prejudice at war with principle; a poetic sense of the poetic; sagacity in the detection, and audacity in the exposure, of demerit; in a word, talent and faith; the lofty honor which places mere courtesy beneath its feet; the boldness to praise an enemy, and the more unusual courage to damn a friend.

It is, in fact, by the criticism of the work, that the public voice will, in the end, decide upon its merits. In proportion to the ability or incapacity here displayed, will it, sooner or later, be approved or condemned. Nevertheless, the mere compilation is a point, perhaps, of greater importance. With the meagre published aids existing previously to Mr. Griswold's book, the labor of such an undertaking must have been great; and not less great the industry and general information in respect to our literary affairs, which have enabled him so successfully to prosecute it.

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The work before us¹ is indeed so vast an improvement upon those of a similar character which have preceded it, that we do its author some wrong in classing all together. Having explained, somewhat minutely, our views of the proper mode of compilation, and of the general aims of the species of book in question, it but remains to say that these views have been very nearly fulfilled in the *Poets and Poetry of America*, while altogether unsatisfied by the earlier publications.

The volume opens with a preface, which, with some little supererogation, is addressed "To the Reader," inducing very naturally the query, whether the whole book is not addressed to the same individual. In this preface, which is remarkably well written and strictly to the purpose, the author thus evinces a just comprehension of the nature and objects of true poesy:

"He who looks on Lake George, or sees the sunrise on Mackinaw, or listens to the grand music of a storm, is divested, certainly for a time, of a portion of the alloy of his nature. The elements of power in all sublime sights and heavenly harmonies, should live in the poet's song, to which they can be transferred only by him who possesses the creative faculty. The sense of beauty, next to the miraculous divine suasion, is the means through which the human character is

¹ *The Poets and Poetry of America: with an Historical Introduction.* By Rufus W. Griswold. Philadelphia: Carey & Hart.

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purified and elevated. *The creation of beauty, the manifestation of the real by the ideal, 'in words that move in metrical array,' is poetry."*

The italics are our own; and we quote the passage because it embodies the sole true definition of what has been a thousand times erroneously defined.

The earliest specimens of poetry presented in the body of the work are from the writings of Philip Freneau, "one of those worthies who, both with lyre and sword, aided in the achievement of our independence." But, in a volume professing to treat, generally, of the *Poets and Poetry of America*, some mention of those who versified before Freneau would, of course, be considered desirable. Mr. Griswold has included, therefore, most of our earlier votaries of the Muse, with many specimens of their powers, in an exceedingly valuable "Historical Introduction," his design being to exhibit as well "the progress as the condition of poetry in the United States."

The basis of the compilation is formed of short biographical and critical notices, with selections from the works of, in all, eighty-seven authors, chronologically arranged. In an appendix at the end of the volume are included specimens from the works of sixty, whose compositions have either been too few, or, in the editor's opinion too mediocre, to entitle them

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to more particular notice. To each of these specimens are appended foot-notes, conveying a brief biographical summary, without anything of critical disquisition.

Of the general plan and execution of the work we have already expressed the fullest approbation. We know no one in America who could, or who would, have performed the task here undertaken, at once so well in accordance with the judgment of the critical, and so much to the satisfaction of the public. The labors, the embarrassments, the great difficulties of the achievement are not easily estimated by those before the scenes.

In saying that, individually, we disagree with many of the opinions expressed by Mr. Griswold, we are merely suggesting what, in itself, would have been obvious without the suggestion. It rarely happens that any two persons thoroughly agree upon any one point. It would be mere madness to imagine that any two could coincide in every point of a case where exists a multiplicity of opinions upon a multiplicity of points. There is no one who, reading the volume before us, will not in a thousand instances be tempted to throw it aside, because its prejudices and partialities are, in a thousand instances, altogether at war with his own. But, when so tempted, he should bear in mind, that had the work been that of Aristarchus himself, the discrepancies of opinion would still have startled him and vexed him as now.

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We disagree, then, with Mr. Griswold in many of his critical estimates; although, in general, we are proud to find his decisions our own. He has omitted from the body of his book some one or two whom we should have been tempted to introduce. On the other hand, he has scarcely made us amends by introducing some one or two dozen whom we should have treated with contempt. We might complain, too, of a prepossession, evidently unperceived by himself, for the writers of New England. We might hint, also, that in two or three cases he has rendered himself liable to the charge of personal partiality; it is often so very difficult a thing to keep separate, in the mind's eye, our conceptions of the poetry of a friend from our impressions of his good fellowship and our recollections of the flavor of his wine.

But having said thus much in the way of fault-finding, we have said all. The book should be regarded as the most important addition which our literature has for many years received. It fills a void which should have been long ago supplied. It is written with judgment, with dignity and candor. Steering, with a dexterity not to be sufficiently admired, between the Scylla of Prejudice on the one hand, and the Charybdis of Conscience on the other, Mr. Griswold in the *Poets and Poetry of America* has entitled himself to the thanks of his countrymen, while showing himself a man of taste, talent, and tact.

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*The Female Poets of America*¹ is a large volume, to match *The Poets and Poetry of America*, *The Prose Authors of America*, and *The Poets and Poetry of England*, all of which have been eminently and justly successful. These works have indisputable claims upon public attention as critical summaries, at least, of literary merit and demerit. Their great and most obvious value, as affording data or material for criticism—as mere collections of the best specimens in each department, and as records of fact, in relation not more to books than to their authors, has in some measure overshadowed the more important merit of the series, for these works have often, and in fact very generally, the positive merits of discriminative criticism, and of honesty; always the more negative merit of strong common sense. The best of the series is, beyond all question, *The Prose Authors of America*. This is a book of which any critic in the country might well have been proud, without reference to the mere industry and research manifested in its compilation. These are truly remarkable; but the vigor of comment and force of style are not less so; while more independence and self-reliance are manifested than in any other of the series. There is not a weak paper in the book; and some of the articles are able in all respects. The truth is that Mr. Griswold's in-

¹ *The Female Poets of America.* By Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Philadelphia: Carey & Hart.

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tellect is more at home in prose than poetry. He is a better judge of fact than of fancy; not that he has not shown himself quite competent to the task undertaken in *The Poets and Poetry of America*, or of England, or in the work now especially before us. In this latter, he has done no less credit to himself than to the numerous lady-poets whom he discusses, and many of whom he now first introduces to the public. We are glad, for Mr. Griswold's sake, as well as for the interests of our literature generally, to perceive that he has been at the pains of doing what Northern critics seem to be at great pains never to do; that is to say, he has been at the trouble of doing justice, in a great measure, to several poetesses who have not had the good fortune to be born in the North. The notices of the Misses Cary, of the Misses Fuller, of the sisters Mrs. Warfield and Mrs. Lee, of Mrs. Nichols, of Mrs. Welby, and of Miss Susan Archer Talley, reflect credit upon Mr. Griswold, and show him to be a man not more of taste than—shall we say it?—of courage. Let our readers be assured that (as matters are managed among the four or five different cliques who control our whole literature in controlling the larger portion of our critical journals) it requires no small amount of courage, in an author whose subsistence lies in his pen, to hint, even, that anything good, in a literary way, can, by any possibility, exist out of the limits of a certain narrow territory. We repeat that Mr. Gris-

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wold deserves our thanks, under such circumstances, for the cordiality with which he has recognized the poetical claims of the ladies mentioned above. He has not, however, done one or two of them that full justice which, ere long, the public will take upon itself the task of rendering them. We allude especially to the case of Miss Talley. Mr. Griswold praises her highly; and we would admit that it would be expecting of him too much, just at present, to hope for his avowing of Miss Talley what we think of her, and what one of our best-known critics has distinctly avowed,—that she ranks already with the best of American poetesses, and in time will surpass them all; that her demerits are those of inexperience and excessive sensibility (betraying her, unconsciously, into imitation), while her merits are those of unmistakable genius. We are proud to be able to say, moreover, in respect to another of the ladies referred to above, that one of her poems is decidedly the noblest poem in the collection, although the most distinguished poetesses in the land have here included their most praiseworthy compositions. Our allusion is to Miss Alice Cary's *Pictures of Memory*. Let our readers see it and judge for themselves. We speak deliberately: in all the higher elements of poetry, in true imagination, in the power of exciting the only real poetical effect,—elevation of the soul, in contradistinction from mere excitement of the

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intellect or heart,—the poem in question is the noblest in the book.

The Female Poets of America includes ninety-five names, commencing with Ann Bradstreet, the contemporary of the once world-renowned Du Bartas, him of the “nonsense-verses,” the poet who was in the habit of styling the sun the “Grand Duke of Candles,” and ending with “Helen Irving,” a *nom de plume* of Miss Anna H. Phillips. Mr. Griswold gives most space to Mrs. Maria Brooks (“Maria del Occidente”), not, we hope and believe, merely because Southey has happened to commend her. The claims of this lady we have not yet examined so thoroughly as we could wish, and we will speak more fully of her hereafter, perhaps. In point of actual merit, that is to say, of actual accomplishment, without reference to mere indications of the ability to accomplish, we would rank the first dozen or so in this order (leaving out Mrs. Brooks for the present): Mrs. Osgood, very decidedly first; then Mrs. Welby, Miss Cary (or the Misses Cary), Miss Talley, Mrs. Whitman, Miss Lynch, Miss Frances Fuller, Miss Lucy Hooper, Mrs. Oakes Smith, Mrs. Ellet, Mrs. Hewitt, Miss Clarke, Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Nichols, Mrs. Warfield (with her sister, Mrs. Lee), Mrs. Eames, and Mrs. Sigourney. If Miss Lynch had as much imagination as energy of expression and artistic power, we would place her next to Mrs. Osgood. The most skilful merely, of those just men-

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tioned are Mrs. Osgood, Miss Lynch, and Mrs. Sigourney. The most imaginative are Miss Cary, Mrs. Osgood, Miss Talley, and Miss Fuller. The most accomplished are Mrs. Ellet, Mrs. Eames, Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Whitman, and Mrs. Oakes Smith. The most popular are Mrs. Osgood, Mrs. Oakes Smith, and Miss Hooper.





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THE reputation of the author of *Twice-Told Tales* has been confined, until very lately, to literary society; and I have not been wrong, perhaps, in citing him as the example, *par excellence*, in this country, of the privately-admired and publicly-unappreciated man of genius. Within the last year or two, it is true, an occasional critic has been urged, by honest indignation, into very warm approval. Mr. Webber, for instance (than whom no one has a keener relish for that kind of writing which Mr. Hawthorne has best illustrated), gave us, in a late number of *The American Review*, a cordial and certainly a full tribute to his talents; and since the issue of the *Mosses from an Old Manse*, criticisms of similar tone have been by no means infrequent in our more

¹ *Twice Told Tales.* By Nathaniel Hawthorne. James Munro & Co., Boston. 1842.

Mosses from an Old Manse. By Nathaniel Hawthorne. Wiley & Putnam, New York. 1846.

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authoritative journals. I can call to mind few reviews of Hawthorne published before the *Mosses*. One I remember in *Arcturus* (edited by Mathews and Duyckinck) for May, 1841; another in the *American Monthly* (edited by Hoffman and Herbert) for March, 1838; a third in the ninety-sixth number of the *North American Review*. These criticisms, however, seemed to have little effect on the popular taste; at least, if we are to form any idea of the popular taste by reference to its expression in the newspapers, or by the sale of the author's book. It was never the fashion, until lately, to speak of him in any summary of our best authors.

The daily critics would say, on such occasions, "Is there not Irving, and Cooper, and Bryant, and Paulding, and—Smith?" or, "Have we not Halleck, and Dana, and Longfellow, and—Thompson?" or, "Can we not point triumphantly to our own Sprague, Willis, Channing, Bancroft, Prescott, and—Jenkins?" but these unanswerable queries were never wound up by the name of Hawthorne.

Beyond doubt, this inappreciation of him on the part of the public arose chiefly from the two causes to which I have referred,—from the facts that he is neither a man of wealth nor a quack; but these are insufficient to account for the whole effect. No small portion of it is attributable to the very marked idiosyncrasy of Mr. Hawthorne himself. In one sense, and

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in great measure, to be peculiar is to be original, and than the true originality there is no higher literary virtue. This true or commendable originality, however, implies not the uniform but the continuous peculiarity,—a peculiarity springing from ever-active vigor of fancy,—better still if from ever-present force of imagination, giving its own hue, its own character, to everything it touches, and, especially, self-impelled to touch everything.

It is often said, inconsiderately, that very original writers always fail in popularity; that such and such persons are too original to be comprehended by the mass. "Too peculiar" should be the phrase, "too idiosyncratic." It is, in fact, the excitable, undisciplined, and childlike popular mind which most keenly feels the original.

The criticism of the conservatives, of the hackneys, of the cultivated old clergymen of the *North American Review*, is precisely the criticism which condemns and alone condemns it. "It becometh not a divine," saith Lord Coke, "to be of a fiery and salamandrine spirit." Their conscience allowing them to move nothing themselves, these dignitaries have a holy horror of being moved. "Give us quietude," they say. Opening their mouths with proper caution, they sigh forth the word "Repose." And this is, indeed, the one thing they should be permitted to enjoy, if only upon the Christian principle of give and take.

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The fact is that, if Mr. Hawthorne were really original, he could not fail of making himself felt by the public. But the fact is, he is not original in any sense. Those who speak of him as original mean nothing more than that he differs in his manner or tone, and in his choice of subjects, from any author of their acquaintance, their acquaintance not extending to the German Tieck, whose manner, in some of his works, is absolutely identical with that habitual to Hawthorne. But it is clear that the element of the literary originality is novelty. The element of its appreciation by the reader is the reader's sense of the new. Whatever gives him a new and insomuch a pleasurable emotion he considers original, and whoever frequently gives him such emotion he considers an original writer. In a word, it is by the sum total of these emotions that he decides upon the writer's claim to originality. I may observe here, however, that there is clearly a point at which even novelty itself would cease to produce the legitimate originality, if we judge this originality, as we should, by the effect designed: this point is that at which novelty becomes nothing novel; and here the artist, to preserve his originality, will subside into the commonplace. No one, I think, has noticed that, merely through inattention to this matter, Moore has comparatively failed in his *Lalla Rookh*. Few readers, and indeed few critics, have commended this poem for originality,

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and, in fact, the effect, originality, is not produced by it, yet no work of equal size so abounds in the happiest originalities, individually considered. They are so excessive as, in the end, to deaden in the reader all capacity for their appreciation.

These points properly understood, it will be seen that the critic (unacquainted with Tieck) who reads a single tale or essay by Hawthorne may be justified in thinking him original; but the tone, or manner, or choice of subject, which induces in this critic the sense of the new, will, if not in a second tale, at least in a third and all subsequent ones, not only fail of inducing it, but bring about an exactly antagonistic impression. In concluding a volume, and more especially in concluding all the volumes of the author, the critic will abandon his first design of calling him "original," and content himself with styling him "peculiar."

With the vague opinion that to be original is to be unpopular, I could, indeed, agree, were I to adopt an understanding of originality which, to my surprise, I have known adopted by many who have a right to be called critical. They have limited, in a love for mere words, the literary to the metaphysical originality. They regard as original in letters, only such combinations of thought, of incident, and so forth, as are, in fact, absolutely novel. It is clear, however, not only that it is the novelty of effect alone which is worth

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consideration, but that this effect is best wrought, for the end of all fictitious composition, pleasure, by shunning rather than by seeking the absolute novelty of combination. Originality, thus understood, tasks and startles the intellect, and so brings into undue action the faculties to which, in the lighter literature, we least appeal. And, thus understood it cannot fail to prove unpopular with the masses, who, seeking in this literature amusement, are positively offended by instruction. But the true originality, true in respect of its purposes, is that which, in bringing out the half-formed, the reluctant, or the unexpressed fancies of mankind, or in exciting the more delicate pulses of the heart's passion, or in giving birth to some universal sentiment or instinct in embryo, thus combines with the pleasurable effect of apparent novelty a real egotistic delight. The reader, in the case first supposed (that of the absolute novelty), is excited, but embarrassed, disturbed, in some degree even pained, at his own want of perception, at his own folly in not having himself hit upon the idea. In the second case his pleasure is doubled. He is filled with an intrinsic and extrinsic delight. He feels and intensely enjoys the seeming novelty of the thought, enjoys it as really novel, as absolutely original with the writer—and himself. They two, he fancies, have alone, of all men, thought thus. They two have together created this thing. Henceforward there is a bond of sympathy

between them, a sympathy which irradiates every subsequent page of the book.

There is a species of writing which, with some difficulty, may be admitted as a lower degree of what I have called the true original. In its perusal we say to ourselves, not "How original this is!" nor "Here is an idea which I and the author have alone entertained," but "Here is a charmingly obvious fancy," or sometimes even, "Here is a thought which I am not sure has ever occurred to myself, but which, of course has occurred to all the rest of the world." This kind of composition (which still appertains to a high order) is usually designated as "the natural." It has little external resemblance, but strong internal affinity, to the true original, if, indeed, as I have suggested, it is not of this latter an inferior degree. It is best exemplified among English writers in Addison, Irving, and Hawthorne. The "ease" which is so often spoken of as its distinguishing feature, it has been the fashion to regard as ease in appearance alone, as a point of really difficult attainment. This idea, however, must be received with some reservation. The natural style is difficult only to those who should never intermeddle with it,—to the unnatural. It is but the result of writing with the understanding, or with the instinct, that the tone, in composition, should be that which, at any given point or upon any given topic, would be the tone of the great mass of humanity. The author

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who, after the manner of the "North Americans," is merely at all times quiet, is, of course, upon most occasions, merely silly or stupid, and has no more right to be thought "easy" or "natural" than has a Cockney exquisite, or the Sleeping Beauty in the wax-works.

The "peculiarity" or sameness, or monotone of Hawthorne would, in its mere character of "peculiarity," and without reference to what is the peculiarity, suffice to deprive him of all chance of popular appreciation. But at his failure to be appreciated we can, of course, no longer wonder when we find him monotonous at decidedly the worst of all possible points—at that point which, having the least concern with nature, is the farthest removed from the popular intellect, from the popular sentiment, and from the popular taste. I allude to the strain of allegory which completely overwhelms the greater number of his subjects, and which in some measure interferes with the direct conduct of absolutely all.

In defence of allegory (however or for whatever object employed) there is scarcely one respectable word to be said. Its best appeals are made to the fancy; that is to say, to our sense of adaptation, not of matters proper, but of matters improper for the purpose, of the real with the unreal, having never more of intelligible connection than has something with nothing, never half so much of effective affinity as has the substance for the shadow. The deepest emo-

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tion aroused within us by the happiest allegory, as allegory, is a very, very imperfectly satisfied sense of the writer's ingenuity in overcoming a difficulty we should have preferred his not having attempted to overcome. The fallacy of the idea that allegory, in any of its moods, can be made to enforce a truth, that metaphor, for example, may illustrate as well as embellish an argument, could be promptly demonstrated; the converse of the supposed fact might be shown, indeed, with very little trouble; but these are topics foreign to my present purpose. One thing is clear, that if allegory ever establishes a fact, it is by dint of overturning a fiction. Where the suggested meaning runs through the obvious one in a very profound under-current, so as never to interfere with the upper one without our own volition, so as never to show itself unless called to the surface, there only, for the proper uses of fictitious narrative, is it available at all. Under the best circumstances, it must always interfere with that unity of effect which, to the artist, is worth all the allegory in the world. Its vital injury, however, is rendered to the most vitally important point in fiction, that of earnestness or verisimilitude. That *The Pilgrim's Progress* is a ludicrously overrated book, owing its seeming popularity to one or two of those accidents in critical literature which by the critical are sufficiently well understood, is a matter upon which no two thinking people disagree; but the pleas-

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ure derivable from it, in any sense, will be found in the direct ratio of the reader's capacity to smother its true purpose, in the direct ratio of his ability to keep the allegory out of sight, or of his inability to comprehend it. Of the allegory properly handled, judiciously subdued, seen only as a shadow or by suggestive glimpses, and making its nearest approach to truth in a not obtrusive and therefore not unpleasant appositeness, the *Undine* of De La Motte Fouqué is the best and undoubtedly a very remarkable specimen.

The obvious causes, however, which have prevented Mr. Hawthorne's popularity do not suffice to condemn him in the eyes of the few who belong properly to books, and to whom books, perhaps, do not quite so properly belong. These few estimate an author, not as do the public, altogether by what he does, but in great measure, indeed, even in the greatest measure, by what he evinces a capability of doing. In this view, Hawthorne stands among literary people in America much in the same light as did Coleridge in England. The few, also, through a certain warping of the taste, which long pondering upon books and books merely, never fails to induce, are not in a condition to view the errors of a scholar as errors altogether. At any time these gentlemen are prone to think the public not right rather than an educated author wrong. But the simple truth is, that the writer who aims at impressing the people is always wrong where

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he fails in forcing that people to receive the impression. How far Mr. Hawthorne has addressed the people at all is, of course, not a question for me to decide. His books afford strong internal evidence of having been written to himself and his particular friends alone.

There has long existed in literature a fatal and unfounded prejudice, which it will be the office of this age to overthrow,—the idea that the mere bulk of a work must enter largely into our estimate of its merit. I do not suppose even the weakest of the Quarterly reviewers weak enough to maintain that in a book's size or mass, abstractly considered, there is anything which especially calls for our admiration. A mountain, simply through the sensation of physical magnitude which it conveys, does, indeed, affect us with a sense of the sublime, but we cannot admit any such influence in the contemplation even of *The Columbiad*. The Quarterlies themselves will not admit it. And yet, what else are we to understand by their continual prating about "sustained effort"? Granted that this sustained effort has accomplished an epic, let us then admire the effort (if this be a thing admirable), but certainly not the epic on the effort's account. Common sense, in the time to come, may possibly insist upon measuring a work of art rather by the object it fulfils, by the impression it makes, than by the time it took to fulfil the object, or by the extent of "sustained effort" which became necessary to pro-

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duce the impression. The fact is, that perseverance is one thing and genius quite another; nor can all the trancendentalists in heathendom confound them.

The pieces in the volume entitled *Twice-Told Tales* are now in their third republication, and, of course, are thrice-told. Moreover, they are by no means all tales, either in the ordinary or in the legitimate understanding of the term. Many of them are pure essays; for example, "Sights from a Steeple," "Sunday at Home," "Little Annie's Ramble," "A Rill from the Town-Pump," "The Toll-Gatherer's Day," "The Haunted Mind," "The Sister Years," "Snow-Flakes," "Night Sketches," and "Footprints on the Sea-Shore." I mention these matters chiefly on account of their discrepancy with that marked precision and finish by which the body of the work is distinguished.

Of the essays just named, I must be content to speak in brief. They are each and all beautiful, without being characterized by the polish and adaptation so visible in the tales proper. A painter would at once note their leading or predominant feature, and style it "repose." There is no attempt at effect. All is quiet, thoughtful, subdued. Yet this repose may exist simultaneously with high originality of thought; and Mr. Hawthorne has demonstrated the fact. At every turn we meet with novel combinations; yet these combinations never surpass the limits of the quiet.

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We are soothed as we read; and withal is a calm astonishment that ideas so apparently obvious have never occurred or been presented to us before. Herein our author differs materially from Lamb or Hunt or Hazlitt, who, with vivid originality of manner and expression have less of the true novelty of thought than is generally supposed, and whose originality, at best, has an uneasy and meretricious quaintness, replete with startling effects unfounded in nature, and inducing trains of reflection which lead to no satisfactory result. The essays of Hawthorne have much of the character of Irving, with more of originality, and less of finish; while, compared with the *Spectator*, they have a vast superiority at all points. The *Spectator*, Mr. Irving, and Hawthorne have in common that tranquil and subdued manner which I have chosen to denominate "repose"; but, in the case of the two former, this repose is attained rather by the absence of novel combination or of originality than otherwise, and consists chiefly in the calm, quiet, unostentatious expression of commonplace thoughts in an unambitious, unadulterated Saxon. In them, by strong effort, we are made to conceive the absence of all. In the essays before me the absence of effort is too obvious to be mistaken, and a strong under-current of suggestion runs continuously beneath the upper stream of the tranquil thesis. In short, these effusions of Mr. Hawthorne are the product of a truly imaginative

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intellect, restrained, and in some measure repressed, by fastidiousness of taste, by constitutional melancholy, and by indolence.

But it is of his tales that I desire principally to speak. The tale proper, in my opinion, affords unquestionably the fairest field for the exercise of the loftiest talent, which can be afforded by the wide domains of mere prose. Were I bidden to say how the highest genius could be most advantageously employed for the best display of its own powers, I should answer, without hesitation: In the composition of a rhymed poem, not to exceed in length what might be perused in an hour. Within this limit alone can the highest order of true poetry exist. I need only here say, upon this topic, that, in almost all classes of composition, the unity of effect or impression is a point of the greatest importance. It is clear, moreover, that this unity cannot be thoroughly preserved in productions whose perusal cannot be completed at one sitting. We may continue the reading of a prose composition, from the very nature of prose itself, much longer than we can persevere, to any good purpose, in the perusal of a poem. This latter, if truly fulfilling the demands of the poetic sentiment, induces an exaltation of the soul which cannot be long sustained. All high excitements are necessarily transient. Thus a long poem is a paradox. And without unity of impression the deepest effects cannot be brought about. Epics were the offspring of

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an imperfect sense of art, and their reign is no more. A poem too brief may produce a vivid, but never an intense or enduring, impression. Without a certain continuity of effort, without a certain duration or repetition of purpose, the soul is never deeply moved. There must be the dropping of the water upon the rock. De Béranger has wrought brilliant things, pungent and spirit-stirring; but, like all immassive bodies, they lack momentum, and thus fail to satisfy the poetic sentiment. They sparkle and excite, but, from want of continuity, fail deeply to impress. Extreme brevity will degenerate into epigrammatism; but the sin of extreme length is even more unpardonable. *In medio tutissimus ibis.*

Were I called upon, however, to designate that class of composition which, next to such a poem as I have suggested, should best fulfil the demands of high genius, should offer it the most advantageous field of exertion, I should unhesitatingly speak of the prose tale, as Mr. Hawthorne has here exemplified it. I allude to the short prose narrative, requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal. The ordinary novel is objectionable, from its length, for reasons already stated in substance. As it cannot be read at one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from totality. Worldly interests intervening during the pauses of perusal, modify, annul, or counteract, in a greater or less

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degree, the impressions of the book. But simple cessation in reading would, of itself, be sufficient to destroy the true unity. In the brief tale, however, the author is enabled to carry out the fulness of his intention, be it what it may. During the hour of perusal the soul of the reader is at the writer's control. There are no external or extrinsic influences resulting from weariness or interruption.

A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents, he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished because undisturbed; and this is an end unattainable by the novel. Undue brevity is just as exceptionable here as in the poem; but undue length is yet more to be avoided.

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We have said that the tale has a point of superiority even over the poem. In fact, while the rhythm of this latter is an essential aid in the development of the poem's highest idea, the idea of the beautiful, the artificialities of this rhythm are an inseparable bar to the development of all points of thought or expression which have their basis in truth. But truth is often, and in very great degree, the aim of the tale. Some of the finest tales are tales of ratiocination. Thus the field of this species of composition, if not in so elevated a region on the mountain of mind, is a tableland of far vaster extent than the domain of the mere poem. Its products are never so rich, but infinitely more numerous and more appreciable by the mass of mankind. The writer of the prose tale, in short, may bring to his theme a vast variety of modes or inflections of thought or expression (the ratiocinative, for example, the sarcastic or the humorous), which are not only antagonistical to the nature of the poem, but absolutely forbidden by one of its most peculiar and indispensable adjuncts; we allude, of course, to rhythm. It may be added here, *par parenthèse*, that the author who aims at the purely beautiful in a prose tale is laboring at a great disadvantage. For beauty can be better treated in the poem. Not so with terror, or passion, or horror, or a multitude of such other points. And here it will be seen how full of prejudice are the usual animadversions against those tales of effect, many

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fine examples of which were found in the earlier numbers of *Blackwood*. The impressions produced were wrought in a legitimate sphere of action, and constituted a legitimate although sometimes an exaggerated interest. They were relished by every man of genius; although there were found many men of genius who condemned them without just ground. The true critic will but demand that the design intended be accomplished, to the fullest extent, by the means most advantageously applicable.

We have very few American tales of real merit; we may say, indeed, none, with the exception of *The Tales of a Traveller*, of Washington Irving, and these *Twice-Told Tales*, of Mr. Hawthorne. Some of the pieces of Mr. John Neal abound in vigor and originality; but in general his compositions of this class are excessively diffuse, extravagant, and indicative of an imperfect sentiment of art. Articles at random are now and then met with in our periodicals which might be advantageously compared with the best effusions of the British magazines; but, upon the whole, we are far behind our progenitors in this department of literature.

Of Mr. Hawthorne's tales we would say, emphatically, that they belong to the highest region of art, an art subservient to genius of a very lofty order. We had supposed, with good reason for so supposing, that he had been thrust into his present position by one of

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the impudent cliques which beset our literature, and whose pretensions it is our full purpose to expose at the earliest opportunity; but we have been most agreeably mistaken. We know of few compositions which the critic can more honestly commend than these *Twice-Told Tales*. As Americans, we feel proud of the book.

Mr. Hawthorne's distinctive trait is invention, creation, imagination, originality—a trait which, in the literature of fiction, is positively worth all the rest. But the nature of the originality, so far as regards its manifestation in letters, is but imperfectly understood. The inventive or original mind as frequently displays itself in novelty of tone as in novelty of matter. Mr. Hawthorne is original in all points.

It would be a matter of some difficulty to designate the best of these tales; we repeat, that, without exception, they are beautiful. *Wakefield* is remarkable for the skill which with an old idea, a well-known incident, is worked up or discussed. A man of whims conceives the purpose of quitting his wife and residing incognito, for twenty years, in her immediate neighborhood. Something of this kind actually happened in London. The force of Mr. Hawthorne's tale lies in the analysis of the motives which must or might have impelled the husband to such folly, in the first instance, with the possible causes of his perseverance. Upon this thesis a sketch of singular power has been constructed. *The Wedding Knell* is full of the boldest

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imagination, an imagination fully controlled by taste. The most captious critic could find no flaw in this production. *The Minister's Black Veil* is a masterly composition, of which the sole defect is that to the rabble its exquisite skill will be caviare. The obvious meaning of this article will be found to smother its insinuated one. The moral put into the mouth of the dying minister will be supposed to convey the true import of the narrative; and that a crime of dark dye (having reference to the "young lady") has been committed, is a point which only minds congenial with that of the author will perceive. *Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe* is vividly original and managed most dexterously. *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment* is exceedingly well imagined, and executed with surpassing ability. The artist breathes in every line of it. *The White Old Maid* is objectionable, even more than *The Minister's Black Veil*, on the score of its mysticism. Even with the thoughtful and analytic there will be much trouble in penetrating its entire import.

The Hollow of the Three Hills we would quote in full, had we space, not as evincing higher talent than any of the other pieces, but as affording an excellent example of the author's peculiar ability. The subject is commonplace. A witch subjects the distant and the past to the view of a mourner. It has been the fashion to describe, in such cases, a mirror in which

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the images of the absent appear; or a cloud of smoke is made to arise, and thence the figures are gradually unfolded. Mr. Hawthorne has wonderfully heightened his effect by making the ear, in place of the eye, the medium by which the fantasy is conveyed. The head of the mourner is enveloped in the cloak of the witch, and within its magic folds there arise sounds which have an all-sufficient intelligence. Throughout this article, also, the artist is conspicuous, not more in positive than in negative merits. Not only is all done that should be done, but (what perhaps is an end with more difficulty attained) there is nothing done which should not be. Every word tells, and there is not a word which does not tell.

In *Howe's Masquerade*, we observe something which resembles a plagiarism, but which may be a very flattering coincidence of thought. We quote the passage in question:

"With a dark flush of wrath upon his brow they saw the general draw his sword and advance to meet the figure in the cloak before the latter had stepped one pace upon the floor. 'Villain, unmuffle yourself,' cried he, 'you pass no farther!' The figure, without blenching a hair's breadth from the sword which was pointed at his breast, made a solemn pause, and *lowered the cape of the cloak* from his face, yet not sufficiently for the spectators to catch a glimpse

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of it. But Sir William Howe had evidently seen enough. The sternness of his countenance gave place to a look of wild amazement, if not horror, while he recoiled several steps from the figure, *and let fall his sword upon the floor.*"—See vol. ii., p. 20.

The idea here is, that the figure in the cloak is the phantom or reduplication of Sir William Howe; but in an article called *William Wilson*, one of the *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, we have not only the same idea, but the same idea similarly presented in several respects. We quote two paragraphs, which our readers may compare with what has been already given. We have italicized, above, the immediate particulars of resemblance.

"The brief moment in which I averted my eyes had been sufficient to produce, apparently, a material change in the arrangement at the upper or farther end of the room. A large mirror, it appeared to me, now stood where none had been perceptible before; and as I stepped up to it in extremity of terror, mine own image, but with features all pale and dabbled in blood, advanced with a feeble and tottering gait to meet me. Thus it appeared, I say, but was not. It was Wilson who then stood before me in the agonies of dissolution. Not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments of that face which was not even identically

mine own. *His mask and cloak lay where he had thrown them, upon the floor.*"—Vol. ii., p. 57.

Here it will be observed that not only are the two general conceptions identical, but there are various points of similarity. In each case the figure seen is the wraith or duplication of the beholder. In each case the scene is a masquerade. In each case the figure is cloaked. In each, there is a quarrel; that is to say, angry words pass between the parties. In each the beholder is enraged. In each the cloak and sword fall upon the floor. The "villain, unmuffle yourself" of Mr. H. is precisely paralleled by a passage at page 56, of *William Wilson*.

I must hasten to conclude this paper with a summary of Mr. Hawthorne's merits and demerits.

He is peculiar and not original, unless in those detailed fancies and detached thoughts which his want of general originality will deprive of the appreciation due to them, in preventing them from ever reaching the public eye. He is infinitely too fond of allegory, and can never hope for popularity so long as he persists in it. This he will not do, for allegory is at war with the whole tone of his nature, which disports itself never so well as when escaping from the mysticism of his "Goodman Browns" and "White Old Maids" into the hearty, genial, but still Indian-summer sunshine of his "Wakefields" and "Little Annie's Rambles." Indeed,

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his spirit of "metaphor run-mad" is clearly imbued from the phalanx and phalanstery atmosphere in which he has been so long struggling for breath. He has not half the material for the exclusiveness of authorship that he possesses for its universality. He has the purest style, the finest taste, the most available scholarship, the most delicate humor, the most touching pathos, the most radiant imagination, the most consummate ingenuity; and with these varied good qualities he has done well as a mystic. But is there any one of these qualities which should prevent his doing doubly as well in a career of honest, upright, sensible, prehensible, and comprehensible things? Let him mend his pen, get a bottle of visible ink, come out from the Old Manse, cut Mr. Alcott, hang (if possible) the editor of *The Dial*, and throw out of the window to the pigs all his odd numbers of the *North American Review*.





Flaccus—Thomas Ward

THE poet now comprehended in the cognomen "Flaccus," is by no means our ancient friend Quintus Horatius, nor even his ghost, but merely a Mr. —— Ward, of Gotham, once a contributor to the New York *American*, and to the New York *Knickerbocker Magazine*. He is characterized by Mr. Griswold, in his *Poets and Poetry of America*, as a gentleman of elegant leisure.

What there is in "elegant leisure" so much at war with the divine afflatus, it is not very difficult, but quite unnecessary to say. The fact has been long apparent. Never sing the Nine so well as when penniless. The *mens divinior* is one thing, and the *otium cum dignitate* quite another.

Of course Mr. Ward is not, as a poet, altogether destitute of merit. If so, the public had been spared these paragraphs. But the sum of his deserts has

been footed up by a clique who are in the habit of reckoning units as tens in all cases where champagne and "elegant leisure" are concerned. We do not consider him, at all points, a "Pop Emmons," but, with deference to the more matured opinions of the *Knickerbocker*, we may be permitted to entertain a doubt whether he is either Jupiter Tonans or Phœbus Apollo.

Justice is not, at all times, to all persons, the most desirable thing in the world; but then there is the old adage about the tumbling of the heavens, and simple justice is all that we propose in the case of Mr. Ward. We have no design to be bitter. We notice his book at all, only because it is an unusually large one of its kind; because it is here lying upon our table; and because, whether justly or unjustly, whether for good reason or for none, it has attracted some portion of the attention of the public.

The volume is entitled, somewhat affectedly, *Passaic: A Group of Poems Touching that River, with Other Musings, by Flaccus*, and embodies, we believe, all the previously published effusions of its author. It commences with a very pretty *Sonnet to Passaic*, and from the second poem, *Introductory Musings on Rivers* we are happy in being able to quote an entire page of even remarkable beauty:

Beautiful rivers! that adown the vale
With graceful passage journey to the deep,
Let me along your grassy marge recline

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At ease, and, musing, meditate the strange
Bright history of your life; yes, from your birth
Has beauty's shadow chased your every step:
The blue sea was your mother, and the sun
Your glorious sire, clouds your voluptuous cradle,
Roofed with o'erarching rainbows; and your fall
To earth was cheered with shouts of happy birds,
With brightened faces of reviving flowers,
And meadows, while the sympathizing west
Took holiday, and donn'd her richest robes.
From deep mysterious wanderings your springs
Break bubbling into beauty; where they lie
In infant helplessness awhile, but soon
Gathering in tiny brooks, they gambol down
The steep sides of the mountain, laughing, shouting,
Teasing the wild flowers, and at every turn
Meeting new playmates still to swell their ranks,
Which, with the rich increase resistless grown,
Shed foam and thunder, that the echoing wood
Rings with the boisterous glee; while, o'er their heads,
Catching their spirit blithe, young rainbows sport,
The frolic children of the wanton sun.

Nor is your swelling prime, or green old age,
Though calm, unlovely; still, where'er ye move,
Your train is beauty; trees stand grouping by,
To mark your graceful progress; giddy flowers
And vain, as beauties wont, stoop o'er the verge
To greet their faces in your flattering glass;
The thirsty herd are following at your side;
And water-birds in clustering fleets convoy
Your sea-bound tides; and jaded man, released
From worldly thraldom, here his dwelling plants,

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Here pauses in your pleasant neighborhood,
Sure of repose along your tranquil shores;
And, when your end approaches, and ye blend
With the eternal ocean, ye shall fade
As placidly as when an infant dies,
And the Death-Angel shall your powers withdraw
Gently as twilight takes the parting day,
And, with a soft and gradual decline
That cheats the senses, lets it down to night.

There is nothing very original in all this; the general idea is, perhaps, the most absolutely trite in poetical literature; but the theme is not the less just on this account, while we must confess that it is admirably handled. The picture embodied in the whole of the concluding paragraph is perfect. The seven final lines convey not only a novel but a highly appropriate and beautiful image.

What follows, of this poem, however, is by no means worthy so fine a beginning. Instead of confining himself to the true poetical thesis, the beauty or the sublimity of river scenery, he descends into mere meteorology, into the uses and general philosophy of rain, etc., matters which should be left to Mr. Espy, who knows something about them, as, we are sorry to say, Mr. Flaccus does not.

The second and chief poem in the volume is entitled *The Great Descender*. We emphasize the "poem" merely by way of suggesting that *The Great Descender* is anything else. We never could under-

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stand what pleasure men of talent can take in concocting elaborate doggerel of this order. Least of all can we comprehend why, having perpetrated the atrocity, they should place it at the door of the Muse. We are at a loss to know by what right, human or divine, twattle of this character is intruded into a collection of what professes to be poetry. We put it to Mr. Ward, in all earnestness, if *The Great Descender*, which is a history of Sam Patch, has a single attribute, beyond that of mere versification, in common with what even Sam Patch himself would have had the hardihood to denominate a poem.

Let us call this thing a rhymed *jeu d'esprit*, a burlesque, or what not; and, even so called, and judged by its new name, we must still regard it as a failure. Even in the loosest compositions we demand a certain degree of keeping. But in *The Great Descender* none is apparent. The tone is unsteady, fluctuating between the grave and the gay, and never being precisely either. Thus there is a failure in both. The intention being never rightly taken, we are, of course, never exactly in condition either to weep or to laugh.

We do not pretend to be the Oracles of Dodona, but it does really appear to us that Mr. Flaccus intended the whole matter, in the first instance, as a solemnly serious thing; and that, having composed it in a grave vein, he became apprehensive of its exciting derision,

and so interwove sundry touches of the burlesque, behind whose equivocal aspect he might shelter himself at need. In no other supposition can we reconcile the spotty appearance of the whole with a belief in the sanity of the author. It is difficult, also, in any other view of the case, to appreciate the air of positive gravity with which he descants upon the advantages to science which have accrued from a man's making a frog of himself. Mr. Ward is frequently pleased to denominate Mr. Patch "a martyr of science," and appears very doggedly in earnest in all passages such as the following:

Through the glad heavens, which tempests now conceal,
Deep thunder-guns in quick succession peal,
As if salutes were firing from the sky,
To hail the triumph and the victory.
Shout! trump of Fame, till thy brass lungs burst out!
Shout! mortal tongues! deep-throated thunders, shout!
For lo! electric genius, downward hurled,
Has startled science, and illumined the world!

That Mr. Patch was a genius we do not doubt; so is Mr. Ward, but the science displayed in jumping down the falls, is a point above us. There might have been some science in jumping up.

The Worth of Beauty; or, A Lover's Journal, is the title of the poem next in place and importance. Of this composition Mr. W. thus speaks in a note: "The individual to whom the present poem relates,

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and who had suffered severely all the pains and penalties which arise from the want of those personal charms so much admired by him in others, gave the author, many years since, some fragments of a journal kept in his early days, in which he had bared his heart and set down all his thoughts and feelings. This prose journal has here been transplanted into the richer soil of verse."

The narrative of the friend of Mr. Flaccus must, originally, have been a very good thing. By "originally" we mean before it had the misfortune to be "transplanted into the richer soil of verse", which has by no means agreed with its constitution. But, even through the dense fog of our author's rhythm, we can get an occasional glimpse of its merit. It must have been the work of a heart on fire with passion, and the utter abandon of the details reminds us even of Jean Jacques. But alas for this "richer soil!" Can we venture to present our readers with a specimen?

Now roses blush, and violets' eyes
And seas reflect the glance of skies;
And now that frolic pencil streaks
With quaintest tints the tulips' cheeks;
Now jewels bloom in secret worth,
Like blossoms of the inner earth;
Now painted birds are pouring round
The beauty and the wealth of sound;
Now sea-shells glance with quivering ray,

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Too rare to seize, too fleet to stay,
And hues out-dazzling all the rest
Are dashed profusely on the west,
While rainbows seem to palettes changed,
Whereon the motley tints are ranged.
But soft the moon that pencil tipped,
As though, in liquid radiance dipped,
A likeness of the sun it drew,
But flattened him with pearlier hue,
Which haply spilling runs astray,
And blots with light the Milky Way;
While stars besprinkle all the air,
Like spatterings of that pencil there.

All this by way of exalting the subject. The moon is made a painter, and the rainbow a palette. And the moon has a pencil (*that pencil!*) which she dips, by way of a brush, in the liquid radiance (the colors on a palette are *not* liquid), and then draws (not paints) a likeness of the sun; but, in the attempt, plasters him too "pearly," puts it on too thick; the consequence of which is that some of the paint is spilt, and "runs astray," and besmears the Milky Way, and "spatters" the rest of the sky with stars! We can only say that a very singular picture was spoilt in the making.

The versification of *The Worth of Beauty* proceeds much after this fashion; we select a fair example of the whole from page 43:

Yes! pangs have cut my soul with grief
So keen that gashes were relief,

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And racks have wrung my spirit-frame
To which the strain of joints were tame,
And battle strife itself were nought
Beside the inner fight I 've fought, etc., etc.

Nor do we regard any portion of it (so far as rhythm is concerned) as at all comparable to some of the better ditties of William Slater. Here, for example, from his Psalms, published in 1642:

The righteous shall his sorrow scan
And laugh at him, and say, "Behold
What hath become of this here man
That on his riches was so bold?"

And here, again, are lines from the edition of the same Psalms, by Archbishop Parker, which we most decidedly prefer:

Who sticketh to God in sable trust
As Sion's mount he stands full just,
Which moveth no whit nor yet can reel,
But standeth forever as stiff as steel.

The Martyr and *The Retreat of Seventy-Six* are merely Revolutionary incidents "done into verse," and spoilt in the doing. *The Retreat* begins with the remarkable line,

Tramp! tramp! tramp! tramp!

which is elsewhere introduced into the poem. We

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look in vain, here, for anything worth even qualified commendation.

The Diary is a record of events occurring to the author during a voyage from New York to Havre. Of these events a fit of seasickness is the chief. Mr. Ward, we believe, is the first of the *genus irritabile* who has ventured to treat so delicate a subject with that grave dignity which is its due:

Rejoice! rejoice! already on my sight
Bright shores, gray towers, and coming wonders reel;
My brain grows giddy—is it with delight?
A swimming faintness, such as one might feel
When stabbed and dying, gathers on my sense;
It weighs me down—and now—help!—horror!—

But the “horror,” and indeed all that ensues, we must leave to the fancy of the poetical.

Some pieces entitled *Humorous* next succeed, and one or two of them (for example, *The Graham System* and *The Bachelor's Lament*) are not so very contemptible in their way, but the way itself is beneath even contempt.

To an Infant in Heaven embodies some striking thoughts, and, although feeble as a whole, and terminating lamely, may be cited as the best composition in the volume. We quote two or three of the opening stanzas:

Thou bright and star-like spirit!
That in my visions wild

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I see 'mid heaven's seraphic host—
Oh! canst thou be my child ?

My grief is quenched in wonder,
And pride arrests my sighs;
A branch from this unworthy stock
Now blossoms in the skies.

Our hopes of thee were lofty,
But have we cause to grieve ?
Oh ! could our fondest, proudest wish
A nobler fate conceive ?

The little weeper tearless !
The sinner snatched from sin !
The babe to more than manhood grown,
Ere childhood did begin !

And I, thy earthly teacher,
Would blush thy powers to see !
Thou art to me a parent now,
And I a child to thee !

There are several other pieces in the book; but it is needless to speak of them in detail. Among them we note one or two political effusions, and one or two which are (satirically?) termed satirical. All are worthless.

Mr. Ward's imagery, at detached points, has occasional vigor and appropriateness; we may go so far as to say that, at times, it is strikingly beautiful—by accident of course. Let us cite a few instances. At page 53 we read,

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Oh, happy day!—earth, sky is fair,
And fragrance floats along the air;
For all the bloomy orchards glow
As with a fall of rosy snow.

At page 91,

How flashed the overloaded flowers
With gems, a present from the showers!

At page 92,

No! there is danger; all the night
I saw her like a starry light
More lovely in my visions lone
Than in my day-dreams' truth she shone.
'T is naught when on the sun we gaze
If only dazzled by his rays;
But when our eyes his form retain,
Some wound to vision must remain.

And again, at page 234, speaking of a slight shock of an earthquake, the earth is said to tremble

As if some wing of passing angel, bound
From sphere to sphere, had brushed the golden chain
That hangs our planet to the throne of God.

This latter passage, however, is, perhaps, not altogether original with Mr. Ward. In a poem now lying before us, entitled *Al Aaraaf*, the composition of a gentleman of Philadelphia, we find what follows:

Flaccus—Thomas Ward

A dome by linkèd light from heaven let down
Sat gently on these columns as a crown;
A window of one circular diamond there
Looked out above into the purple air,
And rays from God shot down that meteor chain
And hallowed all the beauty twice again,
Save when, between the Empyrean and that ring,
Some eager spirit flapped his dusky wing.

But if Mr. Ward's imagery is, indeed, at rare intervals good, it must be granted, on the other hand, that, in general, it is atrociously inappropriate, or low. For example:

Thou gaping chasm! whose wide devouring throat
Swallows a river, while the gulping note
Of monstrous deglutition gurgles loud, etc. [Page 24.]

Bright Beauty! child of starry birth,
The grace, the gem, the flower of earth,
The damask livery of heaven! [Page 44.]

Here the mind wavers between gems, and stars, and taffety; between footmen and flowers. Again, at page 46:

All thornless flowers of wit, all chaste
And delicate essays of taste,
All playful fancies, wingèd wiles,
That from their pinions scatter smiles,
All prompt resource in stress or pain,
Leap ready-armed from woman's brain.

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The idea of “thornless flowers,” etc., leaping “ready-armed” could have entered few brains except those of Mr. Ward.

Of the most ineffable bad taste we have instances without number. For example, page 183:

And, straining, fastens on her lips a kiss
That seemed to suck the life-blood from her heart!

And here, very gravely, at page 25:

Again he 's roused, first cramming in his cheek
The weed, though vile, that props the nerves when weak.

Here again, at page 33:

Full well he knew where food does not refresh,
The shrivelled soul sinks inward with the flesh—
That he 's best armed for danger's rash career,
Who 's crammed so full there is no room for fear.

But we doubt if the whole world of literature poetical or prosaic, can afford a picture more utterly disgusting than the following, which we quote from page 177:

But most of all good eating cheers the brain,
Where other joys are rarely met—at sea—
Unless, indeed, we lose as soon as gain—
Ay, there 's the rub, so baffling oft to me.
Boiled, roast, and baked—what precious choice of dishes
My generous throat has shared among the fishes!

'T is sweet to leave, in each forsaken spot,
Our foot-prints there—if only in the sand;

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'T is sweet to feel we are not all forgot,
That some will weep our flight from every land;
And sweet the knowledge, when the seas I cross,
My briny messmates! ye will mourn my loss.

This passage alone should damn the book; ay,
damn a dozen such.

Of what may be termed the *naiseries*, the silliness,
of the volume, there is no end. Under this head we
might quote two thirds of the work. For example:

Now lightning, with convulsive spasm
Splits heaven in many a fearful chasm. . . .

It takes the high trees by the hair
And, as with besoms, sweeps the air. . . .

Now breaks the gloom and through the chinks
The moon, in search of opening, winks—

all seriously urged, at different points of page 66.
Again, on the very next page:

Bees buzzed, and wrens that thronged the rushes
Poured round incessant twittering gushes.

And here, at page 129:

And now he leads her to the slippery brink
Where ponderous tides headlong plunge down the horrid chink.

And here, page 109:

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And, like a ravenous vulture, peck
The smoothness of that cheek and neck.

And here, page 111:

While through the skin worms wriggling broke.

And here, page 170:

And ride the skittish backs of untamed waves.

And here, page 214:

Now clasps its mate in holy prayer
Or twangs a harp of gold.

Mr. Ward, also, is constantly talking about “thunder-guns,” “thunder-trumpets,” and “thunder-shrieks.” He has a bad habit, too, of styling an eye “a weeper,” as, for example, at page 208:

Oh, curl in smiles that mouth again
And wipe that weeper dry.

Somewhere else he calls two tears “two sparklers,” very much in the style of Mr. Richard Swiveller, who was fond of denominating Madeira “the rosy.” “In the nick,” meaning in the height, or fulness, is likewise a pet expression of the author of *The Great Descender*. Speaking of American forests, at page 286, for instance, he says, “Let the doubter walk through them in the nick of their glory.” A phrase

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which may be considered as in the very nick of good taste.

We cannot pause to comment upon Mr. Ward's most extraordinary system of versification. Is it his own? He has quite an original way of conglomerating consonants, and seems to have been experimenting whether it were not possible to do altogether without vowels. Sometimes he strings together quite a chain of impossibilities. The line, for example, at page 51,

Or, only such as sea-shells flash,

puts us much in mind of the schoolboy stumbling-block, beginning, "The cat ran up the ladder with a lump of raw liver in her mouth," and we defy Sam Patch himself to pronounce it twice in succession without tumbling into a blunder.

But we are fairly wearied with this absurd theme. Who calls Mr. Ward a poet? He is a second-rate, or a third-rate, or perhaps, a ninety-ninth-rate poetaster. He is a gentleman of "elegant leisure," and gentlemen of elegant leisure are, for the most part, neither men, women, nor Harriet Martineaus. Similar opinions, we believe, were expressed by somebody else—was it Mr. Benjamin?—no very long while ago. But neither Mr. Ward nor the *Knickerbocker* would be convinced. The latter, by way of defence, went into a treatise upon Sam Patch; and Mr. Ward, "in the nick of his glory," wrote another poem against criti-

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cism in general, in which he called Mr. Benjamin "a wasp" and "an owl," and endeavored to prove him an ass. An owl is a wise bird, especially in spectacles; still, we do not look upon Mr. Benjamin as an owl. If all are owls who disbelieve in this book (which we now throw to the pigs), then the world at large cuts a pretty figure, indeed, and should be burnt up in April, as Mr. Miller desires, for it is only one immense aviary of owls.





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